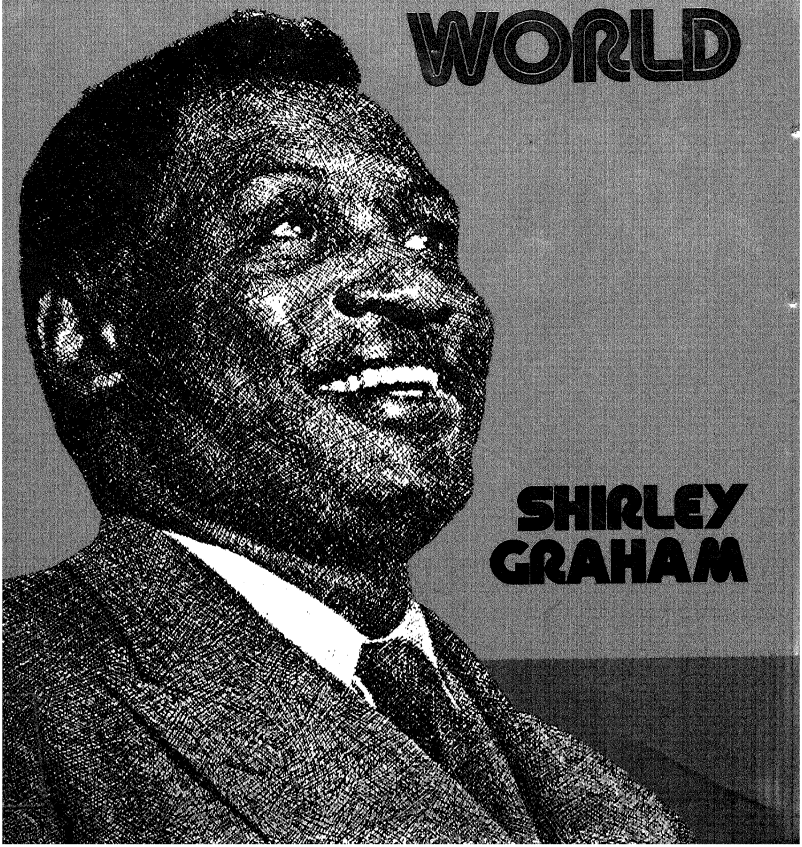
PAUL ROBESON
CITIZEN OF THE WORLD



SHIRLEY GRAHAM

671-32464-0
$4.95

PAUL ROBESON

Citizen of the World

by SHIRLEY GRAHAM

Great singer, great actor, great athlete, and above all, great human being—Paul Robeson has been one of the best known and most universally admired figures in America. He was born in Princeton, New Jersey, during the Spanish-American War. His father was a hard-working, tough-minded preacher who had been born a slave. Paul was the third Negro ever to be admitted to Rutgers College. When he graduated in 1919, he had won his Phi Beta Kappa key, had been chosen end on the All-American football team, had won his R in four sports, delivered the commencement oration, and had been elected to Cap and Skull—the society made up of the four men most fully representing the ideals of Rutgers.

After a disappointing start at the study of law, he decided—with the urging of his young wife—that he ought to be an actor. He joined the Provincetown Players, where he worked with Eugene O'Neill (in whose *Emperor Jones* he starred), Robert Edmond Jones, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and others destined to become famous.

Robeson's first concert was really a lark, an informal gathering at which he sang nothing but Negro spirituals. But it launched him on his two careers—concert tours in America and Europe, stage plays that brought acclaim from critics and public alike. He made more than a thousand recordings, several motion pictures, and worked in radio. And all this time Paul Robeson was curious about the whole world, about the fight of all oppressed people for freedom and better lives. He traveled in the Soviet Union where his son also went to school for some time; he supported the Spanish Loyalists in their fight against Fascism; and he was always found in the front of every battle for a better life for ordinary people. "Through my singing and acting and speaking," he said, "I want to make freedom ring. Maybe I can touch people's hearts better than I can their minds."

By popular demand, a reissue of the long out-of-print biography of an extraordinary man.

Credit John Albert Photos
Jacket design Atelier 57 Ltd.

264+20=284

[redacted]
3 1148 00199 9457

DEC 20 1975 68
MAI JUN 11 1976

MAI JUL 2 1976

OCT 13 1977

MAI JUL 7 1979

MAI DEC 3 1980

FEB [illegible]

MAI SEP 21 1982

MAI OCT 5 - 1982

MAI MAR 1 1984

MAI [illegible]

Y.A.
92 R655g $4.95 72-06246

Graham, Shirley
Paul Robeson. J. Messner,
inc. [1946]

MAIN

kansas city public library
kansas city, missouri

Books will be issued only
on presentation of library card.
Please report lost cards and
change of residence promptly.
Card holders are responsible for
all books, records, films, pictures
or other library materials
checked out on their cards.

PAUL ROBESON

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

BY SHIRLEY GRAHAM

JULIAN MESSNER NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY JULIAN MESSNER
A DIVISION OF SIMON & SCHUSTER, INC.
1 WEST 39TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10018
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

COPYRIGHT, ©, 1971, 1946 BY SHIRLEY GRAHAM

FOURTH PRINTING, 1971

TO MY SON, ROBERT, THIS SYMPHONY OF LIFE

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,
when I give I give myself.

WALT WHITMAN

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ISBN 0-671-32464-0 CLOTH TRADE
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO. 75-160421

Y. A.
92
R555p

FOREWORD

MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS have passed since I wrote "Paul Robeson, Citizen of the World" for the boys and girls of America. I know that thousands of them read and enjoyed it. But, as they grew older they were denied the opportunity to hear his magnificent voice or see him on stage or television. Then, in 1958 Paul left this country and was so warmly and happily welcomed on the other side of the Atlantic that the years flew by filled with activities which took him into many, far-flung parts of the world.

He enjoyed many "triumphs." On a warm Sunday evening soon after arriving in London, Paul gave perhaps the first "evensong" heard in the famous, old St. Paul's Cathedral of that city. The congregation which gathered to hear him went away blessed and inspired. Very soon he was called to the continent for an extended concert tour.

That Christmas (1958) Paul and I sang together on Moscow television. Believe it, or not! Afterwards we went on to a Christmas Party in the Kremlin where Paul was just about mobbed by thousands of gleeful children.

My husband and I were his guests at Stratford-on-Avon when he played "Othello." I had seen his first performance of that play in London in 1931 and later in New York City. But we agreed with the throngs who acclaimed Paul Robeson's "Othello" in the birthplace of William Shakespeare on the Avon River, one of the most magnificent performances of all times.

Meanwhile he had a regular television show in London.

Young Adult 7206246
KANSAS CITY (MO.) PUBLIC LIBRARY

And when the long run of "Othello" ended he left for a concert tour of Australia and New Zealand, followed by another tour of Eastern Europe.

By this time Paul's facility for learning languages had opened up a fascinating field of exploration to him. As he sang "songs of the peoples" of many lands he became conscious of the unity of various languages. He heard and felt the kinship between different varieties of speech and he began sorting them out. He found similarities between Chinese and certain African languages. His planned tour of Africa was eagerly awaited on that continent, but illness prevented him from making the trip.

Paul Robeson's story is a continuing one. We might call this new edition of our book "An Unfinished Symphony" because though the story is not ended the beautiful and unforgettable melodies are heard in life all about us.

Today, as young people all over the world are striving to come together in understanding and friendship, boys and girls of yesterday are now privileged to give to their children the story of a black man who strove to unite the world in peace.

SHIRLEY GRAHAM
NEW YORK CITY
FEB. 18, 1971

INTRODUCTION

I SHALL NEVER FORGET the first time I heard Paul Robeson sing "Water Boy," at a party in New York. The room was crowded, and I was sitting beside him when somebody asked if he would sing it for us. "He got up," as I have told the story elsewhere, "stood so close to me that my head was only a foot or so from his diaphragm, and sang. This was not merely a throat singing. It was a great body living a song. Was it only my fancy that I heard a race remembering? Millions of black voices moaning and laughing? They had come down through time gathering power until they flooded America. The best American music had sprung from them. I was not Negro, but I was American, and these ancient black voices were in some dim way a part of me too." So when I first heard "Ol' Man River," though not sung by Paul. It seemed "already a classic, neither new nor old. No, it must be old. Listening, I could not believe I had not always known it. Some day I would remember. Now the words and music did more than run along my nerves. They swept through me, blood and bone. Men planted, men sweat and strained, men got weary and sick, tired of life and afraid of death, but the river rolled on, silent, surviving them." And never, since those first experiences, have I heard Paul Robeson sing either song without an intense and haunting return of what I felt then.

Such memories have come back to me again and again while I was reading Shirley Graham's charming and moving biography of Paul Robeson. With fine tact she has given her book a kind of musical form, and so fitted it to its subject like words to

music. And yet she has not neglected the other aspects of Paul Robeson's life: his touching boyhood, his shining triumphs as athlete, his sure-footed advance into the world of art where he belonged, and his final arrival among the most eminent men of the age. To look back over his career is to wonder that he could ever have felt any doubts. For he had, from boyhood, enormous talents, quickly recognized by everybody, and almost at once overwhelming in their power. As soon as he was ready, the times seem to have been ready for him. But of course he himself, on any given day in his life, could not be sure what tomorrow would bring. Shirley Graham has somehow known how to combine in her story the strong forward march of Paul Robeson's career with a sympathetic account of his own daily difficulties and uncertainties. Along with the genius which made him a hero, he had also the troubles which are the fate of any man.

Great work is, somebody says, either easy or impossible: easy for men of the necessary gifts, impossible for the rest of us. For Paul Robeson, whatever his troubles, all his triumphs seem to have been easy. His story is a hero story, because it had to be. But it is here told with such unaffected realism that no reader will feel irritated at it, as at so much romance. This is simple truth about one of the world's heroes.

CARL VAN DOREN

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION BY CARL VAN DOREN

THE FIRST MOVEMENT, ALLEGRO

1 THE INTRODUCTION—DAY BREAKS IN SPAIN 3
2 EXPOSITION—BEGINNINGS IN THE PAST 16
3 THE "A" THEME SOUNDS 29
4 OTHELLO—WITHOUT THE BEARD 40
5 NARRAGANSETT BAY 58
6 ALL-AMERICAN 72

SECOND MOVEMENT, ADAGIO

7 THE "B" THEME IN A MINOR KEY 87
8 BLUES IN HARLEM 95
9 TIES THAT BIND 106
10 THE "A" THEME RECURS MARKED "ADAGIO" 121

THIRD MOVEMENT, SCHERZO

11 MACDOUGAL STREET 135
12 "AN' THE WALLS CAME TUMBLIN' DOWN" 147
13 MERRIE ENGLAND 162
14 THE TEMPO ACCELERATES 179

FOURTH MOVEMENT, ALLEGRO CON BRIO

15 ROLLING UP THE HIGHWAY 193
16 THE TRUMPETS SOUND 218
17 THE "B" THEME PLAYED ON TIMPANI 229
18 "LET FREEDOM RING" 242
19 RECAPITULATION—HAPPY BIRTHDAY! 253

CODA 257

AFTERWORD 258

BIBLIOGRAPHY 259

INDEX 261

PAUL ROBESON AS OTHELLO

ESSIE AND PAUL ROBESON, 1932

PAUL ROBESON AND SON PAUL, JR.

PAUL ROBESON CELEBRATES HIS 46TH YEAR

The First Movement

ALLEGRO

I

THE INTRODUCTION—DAY BREAKS IN SPAIN

ABOVE THE DARK LINE of sea the first faint tinge of dawn touched the sky. It deepened to orange-purple, fringed off into pale yellow, coral and saffron. A space appeared of clearest green and then the body of the sky changed from gray to light blue. In the shadows of the west the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada seemed to float like soft woofs of hanging mists while the gently swelling eastward waves reflected level gleams of gold. The sun rose, red-orange on a cloudless sea line, and a pale moon lost itself in the vast space of sky.

Day had dawned in southern Spain. Up and down the Catalan coast fishermen pulling into coves and tiny village harbors rested a moment on their oars and lifted their eyes. So their fathers had looked out over the waters of the Mediterranean and seen the sun rise—so had their fathers' fathers. For fishermen were letting down nets along the coasts of Catalonia when the Carthaginians came to Spain, when Roman galleys brought the armies of Caesar, when Berbers and Moors, sweeping across northern Africa, landed in the shadow of the "great rock" and built an empire of white palaces and mosques. Behind the fishermen Isabella and Ferdinand had waged wars and made roads; north of them the Counts of Barcelona had crossed the Pyrenees and founded a great city.

Now once more there was fierce fighting in the mountains, the molten skies of Spain smoldered and dripped fire, but here on the coast the fishermen greeted the new day with good cheer

and as the sun moved slowly up the coast it fell on many a white sail slipping out to sea flaunting its tip at the huge guns trained on Barcelona from grim battleships lying just outside the port.

The sudden gleam of those guns flashing across the water startled the man leaning against a stone wall encircling the top of a steep projection at the lower curve of the bay. He must have been there a long time, for his face and bare head were damp with spray. But he was conscious neither of fatigue nor cramp. The glory of the sunrise filled his eyes, and the sleepless night with its expectant faces crowding in upon him seemed far away. He remembered that he had slipped out of the hotel and through the darkness had made his way to this high point. Huge, dark, motionless—in the gathering light of the morning he had seemed part of the massive rock as he crouched there. Now when he turned his head sharply and leaned forward it was as if the rock had moved. There was strength in that movement, sure, controlled strength. He felt a quick surge of fierce exaltation even as he studied those battleships menacing Spain's most important industrial center.

Barcelona, facing the sea, fanned out from the fine port and gradually lifted itself to snow-capped mountains. The bright morning sunshine was obscured by smoke which even at this hour poured from the tall stacks standing like sentinels behind the white marble palaces, tree-shaded boulevards, and wide, flat churches. The quays at the waterfront were unusually busy; motorboats chugged at the docks, swinging derricks dangled grappled loads high in the air, dockhands shouted at one another. A boat from Marseilles had just docked and was landing a crowd of men. Frenchmen, together with Italians, Englishmen, Swedes, Americans, pushed across the gangplank and mingled with stocky Catalans on the wharf. There were men with the look of the mountains about them, men from the seaboard and the plains, men from Andalusia,

with Moorish-tinged blood, and husky, blond peasants from the steppes of Russia. Some had knapsacks strapped to their shoulders; some carried short, ugly guns or knives; many wore blue shirts and small, jaunty caps. It was obvious that they were together, that they had come to Spain for a single purpose. They saw the battleships outside the harbor and spat contemptuously.

But the man on the rock overlooking the bay sighed. Men —young men against battleships! Then again the sense of exaltation filled him. Men—standing together—were stronger than battleships!

He leaped to his feet and in that moment could be clearly seen by the fishermen in their boats just below the rock. They stared. Then one of the fishermen shouted, *"El cantor!"*

The little boats were agitated. The fishermen waved their arms and there was another shout, *"El Americano!"*

Then one, his bronze face lifted, cupped his hands at his mouth and called, *"Salud! Gran compañero!"*

The man on the rocks heard them. He called back gaily, *"Salud—mis amigos!"*

His great height reached into the sky as he waved his arms. Then he turned and disappeared.

High up in the city, far removed from the waterfront, the Cathedral bell sounded, a factory whistle blew, and Rafael, plump and amiable porter at the Hotel Continental on the Plaza de Cataluna, rubbed his eyes, yawned, and, pushing back the high portals, stepped out onto the portico.

The air was good. A bit raw, perhaps, but, God be praised, no rain. The quiet of the avenue was pleasant, scarcely disturbed by the small cart, piled high with vegetables, upon which sat a sleeping peasant, being drawn unerringly to market by the sober donkey, or the two black-robed nuns who moved sedately on their way to early Mass. They were part of the landscape to Rafael, whose eyes came to rest on a white-

coated street cleaner who, having wheeled his pushcart in front of the *Teatro Principal* on the other side of the square, now stood staring at the Plaza—not going about his work, just staring.

"And no wonder," thought Rafael, instantly understanding and, because of his good heart, sympathizing. Since it was much too early for guests to be about—or even, what was more important, for the manager—the porter decided to join the street sweeper standing there in front of the *Teatro Principal.* He strolled across the square. It was littered with paper, confetti, ribbons, cigarette stubs, banana peels, crumpled handbills, and only the saints knew what else. Seen in the morning light the Plaza and all the sidewalks and streets near the theater were a mess. Clearly the street cleaner was puzzled. As Rafael approached he shifted his broom from one hand to the other and turned a troubled gaze upon this important personage from the hotel. Porters are in contact with the great world and, therefore, are always wise.

Rafael came to a halt and let his eyes sweep the Plaza. He waited. When the question came it was most plaintive.

"Is it," asked the street cleaner, "that I have missed a Feast Day?"

Rafael, with some difficulty, stooped and picked up a soiled handbill. He smoothed it out in his hand before speaking. Then he, too, asked a question.

"Is it, my friend"—his tone was kind, but superior—"that you were not in the Plaza last night?"

"In the Plaza—last night?" The street cleaner was more puzzled than ever. "And why should I, a poor street sweeper, who must rise before dawn, be in the Plaza last night? If it was now a Feast—"

"Then you would have heard the greatest singer in the world." The porter's tone was utterly definite. "The very greatest!"

"No!" The street sweeper was incredulous.

"Yes!" Rafael waved his plump hand to include all space. "In the whole world! All the people of Barcelona, and many from the country, *everybody* came last night to hear this singer. Did you not see his picture there on the portal of the theater? That is he—that is the great singer." And Rafael pointed his finger.

The street cleaner looked and there, sure enough, right beside the theater entrance was a large picture of a man. Slowly the street cleaner drew near. The broad, warm smile and eyes gazing straight at him were so friendly. He touched the face tentatively. It was very swarthy—darker even than the faces of fishermen from the south of Spain. The little street sweeper puckered his brow. Waves of memory beat about his head. A song—a song—the Mass. Of course, a face so dark could mean but one thing. He had been right at first. There had been a Feast! He faced the porter triumphantly.

"Ah-ha! *Los regis magos!*"

Rafael clucked his tongue. Stupid inlander! Here he was calling the dark singer one of the three kings of *La Natividad de Jesus*. Where was the red robe? Did he see any gifts of rubies or palm oil? Where were the other two kings—the white one and the yellow one? The three were always shown together—in every painting or in every representation at Mass. As Rafael looked up at the billboard he was forced to acknowledge one thing. Indeed there was a similarity between this face and the faces of the dark kings who so often hung above the manger at Christmastime. There was, indeed, a great similarity. He must, however, clear this confusion in the street sweeper's mind. He asked quite logically, "Do you see any manger?"

The little man shook his head.

Rafael pressed his point. "You surely remember that *La Natividad* is long past. We are now in the spring of the year.

Also, you can clearly see here the coat, tie, and collar of a foreigner."

Light went out of the street sweeper's face. Complete bewilderment descended upon him. Over his shoulder Rafael spoke.

"If it should happen sometime that you would look up from your sweepings you would have seen his picture, and you would have known that the great singer was coming here last night."

The street sweeper whirled around. He was angry—angry that he had not known, angry with disappointment, angry because the plump porter spoke so. His voice was shrill.

"I—I—and where would I get money to hear a great singer? With what would I buy a ticket? Where would I get the fine clothes to sit among ladies and gentlemen?" He spat in his anger.

Rafael threw back his head and laughed, shaking his fat sides. The street sweeper's eyes flashed. He seized the handle of his pushcart and gave it a hard shove down the street, but the porter grabbed his arm, saying:

"Wait—wait, my friend. I—"

"Let me go!" The street sweeper tried to shake him off. Now the porter spoke rapidly.

"You wrong me. Listen a moment. Who spoke of money?"

"You mock me." The street sweeper's anger had spent itself. His shoulders sagged.

"No, no, I tell you. I only laughed because you are so wrong. I spent no money last night. I stood here, right beside this tree, my feet here on this ground, and looked up at the stars while he sang. Ah—it was wonderful!"

The little man wet his lips.

"But how—?" he began.

"I shall tell you." And Rafael spread his hands. "It is true

that yesterday, long before time for the opening, people waiting to buy tickets formed a line which curved from this theater door to way out there." He indicated a distant spot. "When the lights were lit there came carriages and cars of all kinds. It was like the old times, before there was trouble. Ah, such a gathering! And they kept coming. Even after the doors opened and the theater was filled there were many more still standing all up and down the streets and in the Plaza. They would not go away. They said, 'We shall see him!' There were sailors from Marseilles who said, 'He will sing—I tell you, he will sing for us!' So they waited. At last the concert was over, the doors flung wide, and many fine gentlemen and ladies came out, climbed into their cars and carriages and rolled away. All the crowd inside the building came out. Then—on the top step he appeared. They pressed about him, shaking his hand. When the people in the Plaza and down the street could see him they cheered and shouted. He just stood there on that place and smiled. They kept on shouting. Then he lifted both arms and all along the street the people quieted down—and he began to sing!"

The porter was silent. The street sweeper held his breath.

"There was a moon, so that we could see him standing there. It was as if the great Cathedral organ was playing in the Plaza."

"What did he sing?" The question was whispered and the porter answered very softly.

"One song came straight out of my own heart. So well I know it. As he sang I could see my grandmother—God rest her soul"—he crossed himself devoutly—"kneading white dough and drawing the sweet-smelling bread from the oven fire—laying it out upon the clothes. She always hummed that song when she was baking. He sang songs of the fields, and of the shops and of the sea. He sang marching songs. Many of them were in other tongues, but always we knew he was saying the

same things—still singing of the fields and sea and men working and soldiers fighting for freedom."

"That I should miss it all!" The little street sweeper was very sad. Now Rafael comforted him.

"Ah, well, perhaps some day he will sing again. At this moment he rests under our roof."

"Here—the great singer is still here?" the street sweeper interrupted him.

"In truth, he is sleeping across the way—in my hotel." Rafael, porter of the Hotel Continental, was very proud. "Last night the people lifted him on their shoulders and carried him to his door. I had much trouble preventing them from entering. Only after he had disappeared would they disperse. I tell you all Barcelona was here. Never have I seen . . ."

He stopped. Skidding around the corner at great speed had come a shining, freshly washed motor lorry. Surely no one less than a General could command such a vehicle in these times! It drew up in front of the hotel, and down from the driver's seat jumped a slender, belted, khaki figure, military cap pulled smartly forward. His lean, tall sparseness proclaimed that he belonged to the mountain regions. Rafael let out his breath in a puff. Well he knew with what disdain those mountaineers regarded his own sleek corpulence. What troubles now were coming from the north? The soldier had paused for one moment, throwing a quick glance up and down the street. Then he ran up the steps of the portico and disappeared inside.

"What is it that—?" began the street cleaner.

But the porter had no breath to spare. Without even a final "Until tomorrow" he was hurrying across the square. Before he reached the lobby he could hear voices. He groaned. Undoubtedly his bell had rung many times. The manager would be furious. But what was happening so early in the morning? His worst fears were realized, for, as he slipped into the side door, he fairly collided with the manager, who, still drawing on his

waistcoat, was hurrying to the front. He glared at his panting porter.

"High and low the clerk has been searching for you!" The words were fairly hissed, shriveling poor Rafael in his tracks. Then the manager was gone, smoothing his hair and fixing a bland smile on his face as he turned the corner. At a safe distance, the porter followed, contriving to peep from behind a pillar without being seen.

Surely all the male guests, at least, had gathered in the lobby. It might have been the dinner hour except for the fact that there were unmistakable signs of much hasty and, in some cases, still unfinished dressing. In truth, one of the young Americans had merely thrown on his dressing gown. The bottoms of his pajamas showed distinctly, as did his bare feet, stuck in soft slippers. Each looked as if some pressing urgency had brought him downstairs at this early hour—though now that they were up, there was much lively talk. Everyone was talking and adjusting ties or smoothing tousled hair. Everyone, that is, except the singer, who, in loose worsted traveling suit, shaven and smiling, was sprawled out in the one wide leather chair. Even in this position he easily dominated the lobby. There was so much of him! With sinking heart, Rafael noted the leather bag near his feet. The young American was saying: "Look, Paul, the trip is dangerous! If you could go by train—"

"The tracks are blown up," another man interrupted, "and the road is crowded with carts and peasants leaving the outskirts of Madrid."

"The roads are filled with highwaymen!"

"Sir"—it was the Englishman, who occupied the second floor right—"Madrid is a dead city—no bull fights, no food, no wine!"

The singer shifted his weight. He stretched his long legs and spoke lazily.

"I have had my fill of good food here in Barcelona. As to

bull fights"—there was a twinkle in his eyes—"not, perhaps, in arenas, but they say *el toro* does not always have four legs." He laughed softly.

"This is no laughing matter!" The American was exasperated. "Good heavens, man, we're worried about you!"

At this the singer swung to his feet. In his eyes flecked little points of light. His gaze seemed to embrace everyone in the lobby and when he spoke his voice was like warm milk.

"You have been wonderfully kind to me. This beautiful city —the audience last night—everything. But—I must go now to Madrid."

Down the broad stairway Rafael saw coming their second dark guest, he who, they said, played for the singer. He carried under his arm a thick portfolio.

There was a final exchange at the desk which Rafael did not attend. But as the two artists faced about a slender Frenchman asked anxiously, "It could not be that M. Robeson is scheduled for a concert in that so dead city?"

The singer was drawing on a light gray topcoat which he adjusted about his broad shoulders before replying. He spoke rather slowly.

"Concert? No. I do not go to Madrid to give concerts." He paused and thought a while. Then he said, "This morning I saw soldiers land here on their way to Madrid. I had been watching the sun rise and they seemed to come out of that dawn—marching together—on their way to Madrid. I go to mingle whatever I have to give with all their giving. I want to climb the Guadarramas and sing with my back against the mountains. No, Madrid is not a dead city. It is perhaps the most alive city in the world today!" His smile flashed as he turned to his accompanist. "Ready, Larry?"

At these words Rafael darted forward to seize the bags. But the young soldier who had stood silently waiting already had them, and Rafael could only bite his lip with disappoint-

ment and go with the others as they swept down to the street, shaking hands and assisting the singer and pianist into the back seat of the car. The one called "Larry" was already up when, one foot on the lorry step, the singer's eyes fell on Rafael, standing there at the edge of the crowd, which had been augmented by people passing along the streets. Then Rafael's heart gave a lurch, for the singer was coming straight toward him, paying no attention to the others. He seemed to tower over him as Rafael felt his own plump hand smothered and pressed in two hands that enveloped it entirely and the golden voice was saying softly:

"Gracias, mi amigo, muchas gracias!"

When he took his hands away, Rafael could feel the crumpled coolness of paper money. But the porter did not open his hand to see the amount of the tip.

Then the shining lorry pulled away. They waved their hands and called, "*Viva* Robeson!" and "*Viva* Paul Robeson!" And in the middle of the Plaza the little street sweeper, seeing what was happening and determined to have some part in it, boldly shouted:

"Viva! Vaya con Dios!"

The lorry made good time as long as it rolled along smooth, asphalt avenues. There was little traffic and it was as if the city, just awakened from slumber, presented a face all freshly washed. But when, rounding a wide, gray church squatting in the middle of the street, they turned into a narrow, cobbled passageway, the driver muttered savagely under his breath. Better a thousand times a rocky path leading straight up the mountain than this tortuous, twisting alley, overhung with dark foreboding structures, smelling of slops and garbage and filled with hollow-faced, staring children. The lorry swerved suddenly, and threw both passengers hard against the front seat as it came to a stop.

"A thousand pardons, *señores!*" The driver's apology was unnecessary. They had just missed overturning a milkman. The dirty nannygoat, which was being milked, stared at them through long, shaggy hair and continued to chew nonchalantly, but the old man leaped up angrily, shook his fists and opened his mouth for a great gust of air which he proposed to blow out with much noise. His mouth remained open. His eyes grew round.

In the back of the lorry, Paul Robeson was standing up.

No one could see where the people came from so quickly, but in a moment they were there. One woman poked her head out of a window, gave a shout, and then came running, waving a handbill. She held it high that all might see. For on it was a picture of the man who stood in the lorry! He laughed aloud with them. The people cheered. Someone grabbed the brimming dish of milk, they shooed the goat to one side, and made way for the lorry to pass.

So at last they came out into the wide driveway, one of the Ramblas built on the site of the thick, high wall which had once encircled the city of Barcelona. They could look off and see gleaming white houses set in the midst of thick, green shadows. Palm trees lifted themselves to great heights on either side and though they met peasants driving ox carts and others riding on burros there was room for all.

They climbed higher, leaving the city and its lovely suburbs behind. On either side were hills covered with ancient vine growth. In the distance rugged ranges of gray rock glistened a green gold in the sun. Sometimes, on a high crag, silhouetted against the sky, loomed a massive castle. Pointing toward the south, the driver said:

"That is called Montjuich, usually interpreted Mountain of the Jews. You can see the fortress there at the top. Those guns protect the city night and day."

Once more they paused to look far behind them and marvel

at the blue sea. Then, suddenly, they were in the mountains. It was as if a gate had closed—everywhere only gray-red rocks, shutting off the sunshine. On one side a jagged wall ascended high above them, on the other it dropped away to sickening depths below. There was only the narrow ledge, with no beginning and no end, as the lorry twisted and turned, hugging the mountain rim.

"This road was built by Queen Isabella in the fifteenth century." The driver spoke cheerfully without turning his head.

"I do hope she did a good job!" Larry Brown's voice was most fervent. He was looking down—way down over the side of the lorry. They could hear the driver chuckling. But he did not take his eyes from the road.

"It was intended only for horses and donkeys. Only recently have cars attempted to use it. But do not fear, *señores,* this good little car has climbed many mountains."

"What if we meet someone?" Brown's question was merely tentative.

"That, we pray to the good Lord, does not happen!" The driver chuckled again.

Paul Robeson lay back and for a moment closed his eyes. It would be all right. He was going to Madrid. He had no fears. He knew he would get there. Climbing—climbing . . .

From somewhere out of the past a wisp of thought stirred and lightly brushed across his mind. What was he doing in Spain—climbing a mountain? Spain—glamorous Spain, sunny Spain, bloody Spain . . . cut off from Africa only by a narrow stream of water! They said that once men had walked across dry land from Africa to Spain. They must have climbed the mighty rock Gibraltar in those days. Perhaps . . .

The wisp of thought took shape. He smiled, remembering a dream.

2

EXPOSITION—BEGINNINGS IN THE PAST

THERE WERE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE—pushing through doors and coming right through the windows. He'd never seen such a crowd. How would he ever get up on the platform—even though he was quite large and strong for his twelve years? No matter how many steps he climbed he couldn't seem to reach the top. Heads crowded and towered over him. He swallowed dryly. His speech! He was mumbling words, but no sound came. He tried again and again. Then—he wasn't inside at all, but somewhere high, high up. Now he could see hundreds—thousands of faces all turned up to him. He was on a mountain and all the valley below was filled with people. He spoke to them and they waved their hands. He could feel himself growing bigger and bigger. Then, he realized he wasn't talking. He was singing. Music was everywhere; the clouds and mountains were filled with music. All the people were singing with him and the music became louder and louder until—

"Paul! Paul!"

Oh, dear! Somebody called him. He turned his head to see and then—desperately he clutched at a cloud, for he was falling, falling. The mountains were no longer there—the people—the music—all gone! Only the awful clamor remained. He burrowed deep—squeezing his eyes tight. It was the blanket he was clutching. He lay very still. Maybe Ben would go away. Maybe—the hope was shattered.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Ben was pounding on the bottom step.

"Fathead! Do you hear me? Get up!"

Paul groaned. Bang! Bang! Bang! Now his brother would be coming up to pull him out of bed. He shivered at the prospect. Better answer. Still without opening his eyes, he called hoarsely:

"G'wan, and let me alone!"

"Awright. You're awake. Now shake a leg! Breakfast's ready."

The door at the foot of the stairs slammed and after a moment the quivering all along Paul's body ceased. His dream was gone, but the warm softness of the bed was very pleasant. He lay quietly while fragments of the dream drifted through his mind, weaving in and out with the sounds of early morning. From the thump of pots and pans he knew his father was getting breakfast. Dad always started in plenty of time, so, he reasoned, there was no hurry. The faint tinkle of a bell announced the arrival of a customer in the store. He heard Mis' Fannie's loud greeting and wondered if there would be any groceries for him to deliver before school. Mis' Fannie always paid him for these errands, but *this morning* he'd prefer not being bothered. Then through the window came the lovely sound of somebody *else* chopping wood. Paul smiled and stretched himself. Good old Ben! He had forgotten about the wood after going over his speech with his father last night. Now, Ben was getting it for him! How glad he was Ben was home again! Paul opened his eyes.

It was a beautiful morning, just as it should be. This was a very important day. Paul turned over on his stomach and with his chin cupped in his hands lay gazing out through the narrow windows between the low, sloping roof. The blue, blue sky, with its blankets of white clouds was just like his dream. He grinned. What if tonight he should start singing his speech? Wouldn't that be something? He kicked out one leg. A book fell off the bed and lay open on the floor. Paul looked at it without interest.

He no longer needed it. He knew every word of his speech. He took a deep breath and from somewhere in the pit of his stomach he began: "Mr. President, no man thinks more highly than I do of patriotism—" He stopped, turning the word over in his mind. Pictures began to form—he could see Patrick Henry standing up and facing the Assembly. What was he like? Mr. Jamison had told him about what had been happening, of how the rich Virginian planters dreaded trouble with England, and how Patrick Henry knew they were against him. He must have been a pretty brave man. Paul squared his shoulders and tried another line. "Our brethren are already in the fields! Why stand we here idle?" Oh, it was a good speech! He wished Bill could hear him. Bill—his biggest brother—who was away studying to be a doctor. Bill was seldom with them, but when he was, Paul regarded him with awe. Bill had played football at Lincoln University. Once dad had taken him there to a game. What a game! Well, he thought complacently, this fall he'd be going to high school. He surely would try out for—

"Son! Aren't you dressed yet?"

At the sound of his father's voice, such a flood of well-being and eagerness shot through the boy that, almost with one movement, he rolled out of bed, seized his pants, conveniently lying on the floor, and pulled them on. Suddenly he wanted to get downstairs—to be with his father and Ben. He realized he was starving and he knew a good breakfast was waiting.

"Yessir, I'll be right there." His voice was jubilant.

Three minutes later he bounded down the stairs, his bare feet scarcely bothering to touch the steps, and dashed into the room below, just missing Ben, who came staggering across the kitchen with his arms piled high with firewood.

"Hey, look out!"

The older boy braced himself, but, with a laugh, Paul dodged out onto the back porch. This was the family dressing room. Thick lacing of morning-glory vines climbing along

evenly placed strings formed the outside wall and a huge lilac bush at the end perfectly screened the porch from view. On a bench stood a pail of water, in which was a dipper, and close beside it a tin basin. Over the bench hung a cracked and wavery mirror, a roller towel and, on a string tied to a nail, a comb and brush. Paul quickly filled the basin and dashed cold water over his face, ignoring the piece of soap sticking to a broken saucer. Then he buried his face in the towel. He decided there was no time to use the comb and brush. The pangs of hunger had become unbearable. Odors from the kitchen were tantalizing and he hurried in their direction.

"Did you empty your water, son?"

His father was in the act of removing golden-brown biscuits from the oven! Paul's eyes gleamed. Biscuits! Again he felt the warm glow. Biscuits were special. His father had made them for him! Without a word he turned quickly and, carrying the washbasin to the edge of the porch, carefully poured its contents around the lilac bush. This was the proper thing to do and he felt good doing it.

There was a festive air about the table with its checkered blue-and-white cloth drawn close to the open window. Here a little of the morning sunshine could enter the long, dark and gloomy kitchen whose cavernous corners were filled with all sorts of odds and ends. This kitchen really was a sort of "lean-to" tacked onto the rest of the house and served as a catch-all and storeroom for Mis' Fannie's shop in the front. Not that Mis' Fannie meant to impose on anybody. She gladly rented the upstairs rooms, with the use of the kitchen, to the Reverend —who was a fine man if ever there was one. She did what she could for his motherless little boy—though she did think the girl ought to stay at home and keep house for her father instead of "continually traipsin' off to school." She could see sense in boys going away to school—but a girl! But the Reverend was set on school. It was too much for Mis' Fannie.

Paul's father was indeed "set on schooling." This morning as they bowed their heads for the blessing his voice was vibrant with deep feeling. More than fifty years before a sturdy black boy on the Robeson plantation in North Carolina had run away to find freedom. The wrinkled, old voodoo woman, who lived alone on the edge of the swamp, had whispered in his ear—many nights she had whispered.

"Ah know yo', boy—Ah know yo' great-gran'sire in Af'ica. No mahn could make a slave o' he, no mahn could break he will, o' ben' he back!" Thrilling words whispered in the night!

W.D. (so they called the slave boy) had listened. He heard of mighty peoples—Bantus—who roamed wherever and whenever they wished. Over hills and through valleys and across great rivers they went. They were free! These were *his* people—so the toothless, withered voodoo woman said. And he believed her. Every time he looked up at the sun, he knew that it was true. He heard it in the winds at night. The trees and rivers whispered, too, of freedom. And so the slave boy ran away.

That same year a gaunt, drab man named Thaddeus Stevens shouted in Congress: "All men are either free or slaves, North and South!"

A mighty wind was blowing and when W.D. headed toward the North Star, many hands stretched out to help him. Nor did he ever forget that many of those hands were white. Though laws had been passed making it a crime to feed or hide runaway slaves, he managed to get food and he hid in outhouses and barns, in cellars and often under newly cut hay. Many times he was afraid, but he was not caught. Slowly and heavily the mills of justice began to grind. Sullen men gathered in armies. There was plenty of hard, back-breaking work to be done. If a Negro youth worked with a will, the haggard, hard-pressed soldiers asked no questions. Paul Robeson's father had not gone on to Canada. He had chosen to remain and make his place in the midst of the struggle.

Hunger and cold and bleeding feet, curses and blows—trifles to pay for freedom. So he explained it to his children. It is the dignity of this father they remember, and his determination. His greatest concern had been that he should be worthy of his trust. "A free man must be educated." He heard talk of Frederick Douglass, of his learning and eloquence. And so he found his way to Lincoln University. There W.D. worked and studied until one day they handed him a roll of sheepskin on which was written the name he had given himself—"William D. Robeson." Now, he was ready to lead his people out of ignorance into the light of knowledge. He became a minister, humbly and sincerely accepting his responsibility.

The years had passed. His sons and daughter were following in his footsteps. Here were his two youngest—nineteen-year-old Ben, with them again from Biddle University, and little Paul graduating from the eighth grade, first in his class. The Reverend never praised his sons. He thanked God for them.

Some time later the father stood in the doorway and watched Paul as he trotted off for this last day of school.

"Just to get our report cards," he had informed them. "Afterwards we're going to practice at the church."

When the boy reached the corner he turned and waved gaily.

Was it a sob or merely a deep sigh that caused Ben to look up quickly? He gave a slight start. Perhaps because he had been away or perhaps now that he was older he was more aware. His father had always seemed so tall, so straight. His throat contracted as he studied the shabby, stooped figure, one gnarled, wrinkled hand grasping the side of the door as if for support, the bowed head with its thinning white hair. He realized how tired his father must be—and how lonely. Leaving the place beside the cabinet where he was working, he spoke casually over his father's shoulder.

"The kid's growing."

"A child needs his mother." The words came heaviiy and Ben sensed the pain behind those deep, black eyes. He drew his arm through that of the older man and said simply, but with deep meaning, "Paul has you."

They stood together—looking down the street. But neither of them was seeing the mean, unpainted houses, the vegetable wagon passing in a swirl of dust, nor the squawking fat hen, with wings spread, running to one side. They were remembering a bright, spring morning—six long years ago. Just such another day as this—and Ben running, running, running wildly through the streets. "Dad! Dad! Where is my father? Tell him to come quickly! Ma—ma—!" They'd found him at last, praying beside the bed of a sick member. He didn't understand—hadn't wanted to leave. But they had dragged him away, Ben clinging to his father's hand, babbling, babbling, "Fire—fire—mother—!"

At home, neighbors were with the nearly blinded mother. She was burned almost beyond recognition—writhing and moaning in agony. At the sound of her husband's voice, when she realized he was there on his knees beside her, love conquered pain and she died quietly in his arms.

Chubby, good-natured little Paul had been carried off by a neighbor that morning, leaving his mother free to do a thorough job of spring housecleaning. Ben was helping her. The huge, pot-bellied heating stove in the living room was heavy, but the rug had to be pulled out. It all happened in a moment—the swaying stove spilling hot coals, flames leaping up the front of her thin dress, Ben terrified, trying to beat out the fire with his hands—screams! When the doctor arrived he did all he could to ease her pain.

With her death there ended for the Robesons twenty-five years of vigorous, warm living in the big, rambling parsonage in Princeton, New Jersey. Here the young preacher with his

diploma from Lincoln University had brought his bride, the slender Maria Louisa Bustill, who had been a schoolteacher in Philadelphia when she met the serious, hard-working student. Her family, proud "free Negroes" of mixed Indian stock, belonged to the Quaker colony in Pennsylvania. They were educated and quietly cultured. Louisa could appreciate the depth and sincerity of the man she married. Their eight children had been born in Princeton. Each year as they enlarged the parsonage the members' pride in their pastor deepened. He stood first in the community, was teacher and guide and judge. The children outgrew trundle beds, broke windows and overflowed into the yard. For the older ones each room of this house will always be packed full of memories which spell home and mother.

Paul Robeson was born April 9, 1898. His first airing in the huge and well-worn baby carriage was probably along a way blazing with orange-and-black banners while town and campus folks cheered Princeton men as they marched down Nassau Street, mobilized for the Spanish-American War. Princeton had a long and honorable tradition to uphold. Here, in a battle which ended within Nassau Hall itself, George Washington had revitalized his worn and tattered troops; from June to November of 1783 the town had been the nation's capital. Princeton was always in the front lines of volunteers. So, that spring of 1898, bands were playing from Carnassa Park to Mercer Street.

Tall trees, wide streets, the green of rolling campus, the majesty of ivy-hung walls, fun-filled, warm, golden days. . . . Paul's earliest impressions wrap themselves around his gentle mother. Her voice, her faith and her unshaken poise encompass him. The occasional Quaker "thee" and "thou" in her speech lie embedded in the core of his being. The day of tragedy bereft him of his childhood. Even the four walls of the house which had been home were gone, for soon the heartbroken father moved away, the older children scattered to

schools and work. The aging man and little boy began a pilgrimage, restlessly moving up and down the state of New Jersey.

Much of the nation's early history has been made in New Jersey. From the earliest days her land has served as a corridor between New York and Philadelphia. The old colonial post-roads grew hard with the passing of many feet. Her farmlands attracted immigrants during three centuries. To the colonial settlers—Dutch, English, Scotch, and smaller numbers of French, German and Swedish—had been added wave after wave of Irish, German and Italian. . . . From Ellis Island they could see the near-by fields and pleasant towns of New Jersey. They had converged on these growing towns and established communities in the shadows of the factories much as their peasant ancestors had clustered beneath the walls of the feudal manor. A few Negroes had been among the early settlers. Aided by state emancipation laws, they had passed from slavery into wage labor as coachmen, gardeners, house servants and tannery workers. They owned and operated barber shops, laundries and catering establishments. In such a community Paul Robeson's father had pastored his church at Princeton. But about the year 1900 hundreds of frightened unlettered Negroes from the deep south began pouring into the state. They had no roots and were regarded askance by foreign- and native-born. It was to these people, thrown as they were among the newly arrived immigrants, that Paul's father took his ministry when he closed the door of the Princeton parsonage behind him.

Soon the tall, dark preacher and the little boy became a familiar sight in the villages of New Jersey. He went where he was most needed. Many willing congregations gathered to hear him. He spoke in white-framed churches, in schoolhouses, in halls. He sat on stone fences and talked with old settlers whose grandfathers had defended their homes in the Revolutionary War and with Quakers in whose deep cellars slaves had once

been hidden. Farmers and fishermen and village folk looked forward to his coming. White people said he exerted a "good influence during these troublesome times" and Negroes looked to "the Reverend" for advice and guidance. Italians, Germans, Irishmen, Jews trusted and respected him.

And Paul knew them all—received gifts from their hands, drank bowls of warm milk with little, blue-eyed Soren and laughing, black-eyed Maria. He remembers falling asleep to a German lullaby. The only boundaries of his "home" were the high, blue sky and distant, rolling hills. Sometimes they lived with members of the church where for the time the Reverend Robeson preached. These members had little, but they gladly shared what they had. Sometimes, they set up their own housekeeping establishment in one room and the father cooked and washed and mended—sending the boy out to school, and hearing his lessons. Now, for the past two years, they had been at Somerville, living over Mis' Fannie's store. But better days were coming. For under the Reverend Robeson's leadership the church was rallying all its forces and by dint of putting together many dimes and nickels, with a few dollars, had bought a lot and was building a parsonage! It was almost completed and soon the minister would be moving in. Paul was looking forward to fall when he would enter the big high school. It never occurred to him, however, that his days of roaming were over. He liked people. He liked the world because it was filled with so many different kinds of people. It was a fine thing to be going to the last day of school in the little schoolhouse.

Mr. Jamison, the school principal, was standing on the steps as Paul joined the boys already gathered in the smooth, hard-beaten yard.

"Good morning, sir," Paul called out.

"Good morning, Paul."

That was all, but at the words Paul's realization that this was his *last* day here brought something other than happiness.

There was nothing attractive about the square, unpainted frame building. Paul knew that the two rooms with their battered and scarred desks were crowded, but—gosh—he'd had lots of fun and he really liked the unsmiling man who had been his teacher.

There were those who considered James L. Jamison cold, unfeeling and harboring notions of superiority because of his "light skin." Like Paul's father he, too, had graduated from Lincoln University. The teachers there had given him something he wished to impart to others and immediately he had accepted a job to teach in a small church school in the deep south. At first his light skin had stood him in good stead. He had gone about his work unnoticed and unmolested. Boys and girls, men and women began coming to his school. It was inevitable that such thirst for learning should attract attention. James Jamison was filled with the passion of his mission. In spite of warnings he was certain even the "bosses" could see that the ability to read and write and figure made better workmen. The trouble reached its climax during cotton-picking time. Every Negro—children as well as old folks—must go to the fields. When the young teacher protested—

They told him to get out. He was foolhardy. He insisted on keeping the school open in case anybody *wanted* to come. So now his back would always be a mottled blue, with ugly welts. It takes more than a lifetime to fade such scars. They burned his school.

But there were other schools and not enough teachers to handle the hordes of Negro boys and girls who kept coming—from somewhere. Somerville, New Jersey, gladly employed James Jamison for its one colored school. Nearly a hundred children were enrolled and when it was found that his wife could also teach—for only a small addition to salary—the school board was more than satisfied. They were given living quarters up over the schoolrooms. In the larger of the two

rooms Mrs. Jamison had charge of the first, second, third and fourth grades. In the other room were the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders, taught by Mr. Jamison. He was usually able to get somebody to make fires and do the cleaning. Otherwise, older boys pitched in and helped him.

To this school the tall, dark preacher had brought his little boy three years before. Paul was nine years old, shy, and inclined to a roly-poly chubbiness. But even then one had to be wary about applying the nickname "Fatty"! Sometimes Paul would smile good-naturedly. At other times, the appellation transformed him into an assaulting dynamo with sure, hard fists. Boys soon found that Paul was not soft.

This morning Jamison observed that Paul stood fully half a head above the other boys clustered around him, that his shoulders were broader, that he excelled in physical characteristics just as he had outdistanced the other pupils in grades. Would he go on? His teacher wondered that morning if he would hold out, whether or not he would reach some goal lying far ahead or, like so many other colored boys, drop by the wayside—discouraged, beaten. The principal rang the last bell and students took their places in line.

Opening exercises were held in the primary room—older children either crowded into seats with the little ones or stood around the wall. If there was undue shuffling of feet or pushing during the scripture reading, Mr. Jamison seldom noticed it. But everyone knew there was to be no nonsense during prayer. After that each class passed to its own place.

This morning Paul had to push through a crowd of little girls gathered round the door. Dressed in their Sunday best, they were chatting gaily. The last day of school was an event and "passing" was something to talk about.

"My ma say she gonna get me a brand-new pair of white shoes—if I pass," Paul heard the whisper.

"I'm gonna get a new taffeta!"

Then they looked after Paul. He was a graduate! He also was the "preacher's boy."

"I wonder what he . . .?"

Paul knew they were talking about him. He climbed onto the window sill with a show of complete nonchalance. He was filled with scorn. Imagine getting presents for passing! He knew what his father would think of such a thing. Passing was the thing to do. Imagine *not* passing! The very thought made Paul shudder. Why, he'd have to run away. He could never bring such disgrace on dad and— At that moment Mrs. Jamison sounded a chord on the piano and everybody stood up.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing—

The children's voices rose and poured out through the open windows. Old man Leesh, hobbling along on the other side of the street, stopped to listen. He shifted his weight off his bad leg and for the first time that morning really felt the warm sunshine through his threadbare coat. Around the corner, Mrs. Lavinsky, her mouth full of clothespins, let fall the snowy sheet she was about to stretch along the line. Straightening up above the clothes basket, she smoothed back her hair. Proud feelings filled her heart to bursting. Only last week her husband had taken out his first citizenship papers. He was teaching this song to her. Now her lips formed the unaccustomed words—her eyes were shining—

From every mountainside
Let freedom ring.

Blinking his red-rimmed eyes, old man Leesh shuffled on down the street. Mrs. Lavinsky bent again over her basket. Paul climbed back in his seat. Davenport Street School had opened.

3

THE "A" THEME SOUNDS

"MY GOODNESS, nearly twelve o'clock!"

Lizzie Potter's exclamation startled the large, gray cat curled up under the crisp dotted-Swiss curtains. The sunny sill was an ideal spot for a catnap and for some time now there had been no sound in the big, cheerful kitchen save an occasional thump on the ironing board and the soft flop of comfortable old shoes as their owner shuffled over to the stove for a hot iron. An air of peaceful tranquillity mingled with the good, savory smell coming from the pot simmering on the back of the stove. But after that one startled glance at the mantel clock, quivering waves of action broke in all directions at once.

Having been rudely awakened, the cat jumped down, arched his well-rounded back and impatiently pawed the bare floor. His mistress gave an expert turn to the gleaming white garment on the board and decided that a hot iron was needed. She hurried to the stove, banged down the one she had been using and, having first wet her finger in her mouth, tested several others, shoving them around with much noise. None was quite right. There followed the clatter of stove lids being removed and the rattle of coal dumped from the scuttle into the yawning, red openings; then more shifting of irons and the swish of water in the washbasin where every trace of coal blacking was removed from long, capable brown hands. The cat whined softly.

"Out of the way, kitty."

The cat attempted to rub against the passing figure, but the

flop, flop, flop of old shoes did not abate until they took their place under the ironing board, and in the wake of the hot iron gleaming spaces of white emerged.

"I must finish these dresses before Margaret gets home. And that won't be long." The clock seemed to tick extra loud and the cat decided on another nap, but this time in front of the door. Margaret would soon be coming home. And that meant dinner.

Everybody in Somerville knew Tom Potter's widow. Folks took special pride in pointing out the nice frame house with its neat hedge and shining windows.

"No worthless loafer's gonna put his feet under Tom's table," the widow had been heard to remark. And Negro Somerville lauded her sentiments. Tom had left his wife and baby "pretty well fixed," with the house paid for and all. True, there had been no money. But the rather frail, soft-voiced young woman with her clear, russet skin had held the robust, brown baby and said, "If the good Lord'll just give me health, I'll bring up little Margaret all right." Beginning right then she always had plenty of work. The white people in Somerville saw to that, because Lizzie Potter came of "good stock."

Tom's father had been old man Josiah Doughity's coachman when the best people of New York, Philadelphia and Washington rode in his carriage, and when the fine, big Doughity place was a center of social activity and good living. It sat among great oak trees, surrounded by a stone wall. Tom had practically grown up with the Doughity children. He was trusted and respected. Now only Miss Sarah Doughity was living and the Doughity mansion needed painting. But though most of the blinds were drawn, the house remained the town's show place and "Miss Sarah" its "first lady."

The delicate little white-haired lady never wore a "bought" garment, so Lizzie Potter spent many hours "on the hill," as the Doughity place was still designated. For Miss Sarah knew

she could trust any length of silk or broadcloth to Lizzie Potter's capable fingers.

Except for Miss Sarah's, most of Mrs. Potter's sewing was done at home. She was therefore able to take care of her house and look after Margaret, who "outgrows clothes faster than anybody in town."

A faint smile played about the lips of Margaret's mother as she slipped the soft white dress from the board and shook it out. It was lovely—just right. Her baby's graduating dress! It didn't seem possible.

Her hands were trembling a little and tiny beads of perspiration stood on the smooth, brown forehead, but Mrs. Potter gave her head a little impatient toss as, holding the dress carefully in front of her, she hurried into the next room and laid it on the bed beside what, surprisingly enough, appeared to be its twin. For the dress already stretched on the patchwork quilt was identical, with the final, crisp, white ruffle. Standing back, Margaret's mother surveyed the two of them.

"The girls surely will be pretty tonight!"

On this happy thought she returned to the hot kitchen, put the board away and was vigorously stirring up a bowl of cornbread when steps sounded on the back porch.

"Hi, ma!"

The cat rose to its feet and stood expectantly regarding the bright-eyed girl who, with her books, was filling the doorway.

"Now don't stand there holding the screen open," her mother admonished. "Flies swarm in."

But she smiled as Margaret dumped her books on the table and enthusiastically sniffed. Thirteen-year-old Margaret liked to eat.

"Gosh, I'm hungry!"

Her mother looked up with a disapproving frown. Unheeding, Margaret was examining the contents of the pot on the stove. Satisfied, she announced briskly, "I'll set the table."

"Is everything ready for tonight? How'd the practice go?" Mrs. Potter's mind was leaping ahead.

"Oh—all right—I guess." The answer was so unlike Margaret that Mrs. Potter looked at her sharply.

"You guess? Don't you know? What did Mr. Jamison say?"

"Well"—Margaret's tone was guarded—"Paul didn't want to sit on the platform. He said—he said he'd rather just come up for his speech. He—" She stopped, then burst out explosively, "He acted like he didn't want to sit up front with Elsie and me!"

Mrs. Potter clucked her tongue sympathetically, but she said:

"Shucks, that's nothing. Boys are like that. When he sees how nice you and Elsie look tonight he'll be proud. I finished the dresses. They're lying on the bed—all pressed."

As Margaret ran into the bedroom, her mother called: "Don't touch them. You haven't washed your hands."

After a few moments, hearing no sound, Mrs. Potter glanced rather anxiously in that direction. Then, her curiosity getting the better of her, she peeped in. Margaret was hanging over the footbase, apparently lost in contemplation of her dress. But when she looked up her mother saw that her eyes were troubled.

"What's the matter, child? Don't you—don't you like it?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. It's beautiful." She touched the dress gently. "I know this one is mine because it's a tiny bit longer."

"Yes. Otherwise, they're exactly the same. Since there were only you two girls graduating it will be lovely for . . ."

Margaret had walked to the window.

"Why, Margaret, what on earth is the matter?"

"I wonder . . . I wonder . . ." She turned and looked up into her mother's face. "What about Paul?"

For a moment there was silence.

"Well, Paul's a boy. I reckon he'll . . ." Margaret's

mother's voice ran out before the insistent question in Margaret's eyes. The child spoke almost passionately.

"Paul's ahead of Elsie and me. He's making a speech tonight. And—and—what—will he wear?"

"Mercy on us, child." Mrs. Potter forced a certain briskness into her voice. "You got no call to be worryin' 'bout Paul. The Reverend will see that Paul—"

Margaret, with some age-old wisdom of the girl-child, interrupted. "Somebody's *got* to worry about Paul! I asked him and he—" and then she told her mother what had happened.

The graduation practice had not gone well. In the first place, the church committee had already started to clean and decorate the church when Mrs. Jamison arrived with the children. The committee wanted to get the job done as quickly as possible and fifty boys and girls running all over the place were in the way. For the children were in high spirits. School was out! Everything was fun! Even the church which they were in the habit of entering each Sunday morning on tiptoe, under the eye of stern and silent parents or elders, now with its windows open, pews and chairs out of place and rented palms, was shorn of the accustomed forbidding and awful solemnity, and the sight of Deacon Wayne's wife perched perilously on a shaking ladder, waving white bunting over the altar, brought immediate shouts of laughter. No amount of discipline could suppress the snickers which accompanied the dignified descent from the ladder of the Deacon's wife. Mrs. Jamison was both pained and apologetic. She herded the chorus into place, played the opening bars of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," and waved her hand. Nothing happened. It seemed that the boys in the back row were pushing the second altos into the choir room. Then, little Millie Turner began to cry!

Only with the arrival of the "Professor" did things get under way.

Margaret Potter, Elsie Rogers and Paul had held them-

selves quite aloof during all the preliminaries. They were the stars of the program. Elsie was a pretty little girl. She was going to sing, and second to her thought of how she would appear at her graduation was her determination to "save" her voice. However, from the whispers he had been hearing all morning "dresses," hair ribbons" and "shoes" occupied both girls' minds to the exclusion, Paul thought bitterly, of everything else.

Paul knew that Margaret's mother had made the dresses. He also knew they were to be exactly alike. No one could have gone to class with Margaret and Elsie these past two weeks and missed these details. But until today Paul had related none of all this to himself. It had been strictly "girl doings." This morning disturbing pictures were in his mind. Now, Mr. Jamison was saying briskly, "All right, Margaret, Elsie, Paul—take your places."

Paul looked at the three chairs which had been placed on the altar platform. The pulpit and the high-backed chairs where his father and the two elders usually sat had been removed. The graduates were to occupy that place of honor for the evening—facing the audience. Suddenly and vividly Paul saw himself—up there—sitting between Margaret and Elsie in their new, white dresses—made by Margaret's mother. He swallowed.

"Mr. Jamison—couldn't we—couldn't we—" He stopped. Mr. Jamison's back was turned. He was arranging the table. The girls were already going forward, walking very primly. Mr. Jamison smiled at them and then looked back at Paul. He said impatiently, "Well, Paul, hurry. What are you saying?"

"Do we have to sit—up there?" Paul had not moved from his place.

Somebody snickered. And Paul felt a muscle in his back ripple. If that was one of the Moore boys being smart, he'd take care of him—later. Mr. Jamison was frowning.

"Of course. There's plenty of room for the three of you."

"They didn't sit up there last year," Paul persisted. Last year he had sung in the school chorus.

"There were too many to seat them up here. This is a class of quality, though lacking in quantity." The professor's face softened with one of his rare smiles. There was no answering smile on Paul's face. His voice was almost sullen.

"I'd rather sit on the front seat."

From their places Margaret and Elsie stared down at him. They were puzzled and embarrassed. Paul was not only the classmate of whom they were both so proud, he was their friend. But now as he returned their gaze his eyes were hostile. Why was he acting so?

Mr. Jamison was also puzzled and surprised. At this moment, however, he was tired and pressed for time. Paul, he thought, is reaching that awkward age. He's large and a bit ungainly, but there is no sense in giving way before a case of adolescent shyness. He spoke decisively.

"Paul, come up here immediately. You are an honor graduate and your place is on this platform."

Heavy silence hung in the air as Paul slowly walked down the aisle and took his seat between the two girls. Everybody was uncomfortable. Some of the larger boys shuffled their feet sympathetically. Mrs. Jamison fumbled her music nervously. What on earth had come over Paul Robeson this morning?

When Paul rose for his part on the program his voice was heavy and listless.

Even bad rehearsals end. The girls managed to catch Paul as he was pushing through the outer door.

"Paul!" It was quite apparent that he didn't want to talk. Yet—"Why did you—"

Margaret grabbed his arm, pulling him along.

"Let's get outside."

They came out under the little archway and Paul immediately started down the stairs. But Margaret stayed close to his side and spoke almost casually.

"Hey, Paul, no fair! You haven't told us anything." Paul hesitated on the step. "What are *you* going to wear—tonight?"

At that he faced her squarely, his head high. And his voice was quite clear and strong.

"Wear?" He sounded surprised at such a foolish question. "Why, what do you think?"

Then before either of them could answer he was down the stairs and gone—walking very fast.

"That'll hold 'em," he thought wrathfully. "Meddlin' girls!"

He thought he heard Margaret calling, but he wouldn't look back, and as soon as he was around the corner he began to run so that the rapid movement of his body could keep pace with his beating heart. Gradually, he settled into an even, rhythmic stride. The muscles in his throat and stomach relaxed; he breathed deeply and for a time was conscious only of movement.

Before long he was on the highway, leaving the town behind him. One hundred and fifty years before, George Washington had passed along that same highway. Only, then, no plum trees had been in bloom behind rail fences nor had patches of wild azaleas been scattered beside the road. At that time the ditches had been piled high with snow and the leaden skies, twisted with icy blasts, had been no heavier than the heart of that young General.

Historical events had no significance for Paul this afternoon. He ran easily, elbows close to his side, back straight—like an Indian. Finally, slowing down, he let out his breath in a long sigh. He was hot and tired. He looked around. Beside him was a high stone wall, backed by a dense screen of trees. Paul knew this was the highway boundary of the Duke estate with its two

thousand acres spread out along the south bank of the Raritan River. Ben had worked here the summer before and Paul knew all the gardeners. He was glad he had come this way, for they would not mind if he slipped through the gate and quietly rested in some hidden corner of the spacious grounds. They would know he would not pick a flower or trample the tender, young grass.

It was like another world inside. Paul followed a tiny path beneath the towering pine trees which vaulted above him and formed an arch of delicate, arabesque pattern. The sun, no longer something of heat and dust, became a million liquid diamonds tossed toward the sky from granite basins; heavy blossoms bending forward on thick stems filled the air with perfume and all around him lay a soft, inviting blanket of green. Well out of sight of the porticoed, stone dwelling and stone stables, Paul threw himself flat on the ground, flung his arms wide and pressed his face against the sweet earth. Suddenly he was crying.

Over the head of this twelve-year-old boy rolled the years, backward and forward. He was lonely and, with startling clarity, he saw that loneliness setting him apart for all time to come. At that moment the boy cried because he was set apart, because life and realization rushing upon him were too much, because, deep down inside of him—he *knew*.

Gradually his sobbing ceased. He might have been part of the earth itself, so quietly did he lie prone on the ground. Comfort and strength entered his bones and sinews, roots were taking hold and he was thinking.

His mother would have understood. Margaret's mother making lovely, white dresses—the other mothers getting things ready—all with that same look in their eyes. For a moment dark waves engulfed him again, but he struggled upward. His mother—would have been proud—of him. He clung to the thought desperately. Yes, she would have been proud, and she

would have looked up at him with shining eyes, no matter what he had on. Only, she would have—

What did it matter if he had nothing new to wear? His father just hadn't thought about it, and anyhow, there was so little money. His father was wonderful; he never talked about ordinary things—like clothes, or—or—circuses. They—they—weren't *important*. Paul's mind blundered on, turning and sorting, trying to find its way. Pictures of his father began to form—pictures which that father had drawn of the past, and much that Paul himself remembered. The frame enlarged and the figures and locations changed; books and folklore and discussions they had had at the table merged and faded into one another—Africa, slavery, the Underground Railroad, and Bill, whom they would not admit to Princeton University. His brother's bitter disappointment!

Paul sat up. Was he so "different" after all? How could he be otherwise than what he was? Did Patrick Henry have a new suit when he made that speech in the Virginia Assembly? Paul grinned and clasped his arms about his knees. Of course not. Patrick Henry had been much too busy thinking about getting *action* to be bothered about clothes. He'd speak like Patrick Henry had—so well, they wouldn't notice his old clothes at all.

Action—that's what was needed! The boy sprang up, and leaping on a marble slab, he addressed all the rolling green about him. His voice was low, but intense. His eyes peopled all the spacious beauty around him with eager men and women. There was no sound as every tree and blade of grass and rare shrub—listened.

"For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it. We are not weak, if we make proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power."

His voice swept on. All sense of loneliness had vanished.

"We do not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who

presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. There is no retreat!"

For him, there never could be. The words poured on to their inevitable climax.

"I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

He remained a moment, poised upon the marble slab. A fern swayed in the breeze and brushed across his face, and high in the treetop a tiny warbler began to sing.

Paul jumped down and through the late May afternoon hurried home along the turnpike on which George Washington had marched.

4

OTHELLO—WITHOUT THE BEARD

LAST-HOUR STUDY HALL had become a problem. The "horny" pedagogical rule which decreed that all pupils who had finished classes must devote this final period to study had met with the wholehearted disapproval of first- and second-year students in Somerville High. All the juniors and seniors had classes or lab the last period, but this decision definitely curtailed the afternoon activities of at least one hundred and five young hopefuls from Somerville's more ambitious families. The majority of boys and girls who finished the eighth grade in Somerville at this time did not bother to go on to "High." Those who did felt that they should get away from the halls of learning as quickly as possible. A study period "tacked on" to the very end of the school day was intolerable. So, with this new rule one hundred and five otherwise quite normal boys and girls were converted into a noisy, wiggling mob, drawn together by one single desire —to render as miserable as possible the life of the senior monitor assigned to this period.

In vain did harassed teachers along the corridor complain to Dr. Ackerman. *The Valkyrie* (a monthly publication published by and in the interest of the Somerville High School pupils) took up the matter editorially. But the editor's efforts were somewhat offset by the quip from an "Upper Classman" appearing in the same issue: "Is the last-period study hall reserved for Chinese students? Or are sounds deceiving?" This had not sweetened the tempers nor lessened the designs of those lowerclassmen who already considered themselves definitely

"put upon." Monitors were changed each month. And this was the day a new monitor was scheduled to appear!

The gong sounded for the final shifts of classes. The school went through its regular routine of falling to pieces. Students scurried along corridors, up and down stairs and pushed through doorways. There was much crowding and shoving in the study hall. The monitor of the closing period vanished quickly. Students leaving loudly hailed those taking their places. There was an air of conspiratorial expectancy. What would the new monitor be like? How best to get his or her goat? Such questions lent some zest to what otherwise loomed as senseless boredom.

"We sure took care of that last ninny!" The stout freshman girl dropped her chum's arm and squeezed into her seat.

"I hated the bossy old thing!" Sandra's response merely expressed the class spirit. She really didn't hate anybody.

"Well, where is he—the mighty Upper Classman!" Dick slammed down his books and pounded on his desk to attract attention.

The clock showed one minute to the hour.

"Don't tell me a noble senior could be late!" That was Olson from over near the brickyards.

"What an item to write in the little red book. Oh, boy!" Pete Lyon lived on the hill. He knew how to be sarcastic.

At this moment through the door and across the hall strode the colossal figure of Paul. He had not yet attained the six feet three inches, powerful broad shoulders and phenomenal arm length which were to render him such a formidable foe on the gridiron; but now, senior in the June class of 1915, he towered above his classmates. There was a ripple of pleasure all along the hall. Well, now, this was something—something different!

"Hi, Paul." Jake played on the second team. He looked around proudly when Paul waved his hand and grinned at him. Gee!

"What d'you know, fellows, look who's here!" Olson and Paul often shared lunches.

"Well, I don't know," Tom Bates frowned. "Since when did they start putting those guys in charge of classes?"

"What d'you mean—those guys?" Jake was ready to fight. Olson's eyes narrowed.

"You know what I mean!" Tom growled.

"Oh!" Sandra's black eyes were sparkling. "It's Paul—Paul Robeson!"

"Isn't that too divine! My brother says—"

The song sounded.

Paul had dropped his sheaf of papers on the desk and seated himself. He looked around the room now with a smile of greeting. After a moment he nodded to the boy on the outside aisle and said quietly, "Please close the door."

It could not be said that complete order settled on the hall. Questions were still being whispered and answered. Those who knew Paul were happy to dispense information. Several fellows in the back were still shuffling their feet, undecided. They muttered in undertones. A red-haired girl in the center was staring in astonishment. Her family had only recently moved to Somerville and she had as yet made few friends. Things were so different. Paul paid no attention to these minor disturbances and began arranging his own work on the desk. There was the attendance to check and then he planned to write an account of last night's game. That would finish up his notes on athletics for *The Valkyrie*. Several moments passed. Then a current of awareness produced a sudden hush.

The boy near the door had not moved. Those nearest him had turned in their seats—his attitude drew attention. For, hands gripping his desk, head thrust forward, he was staring at Paul with a sort of smothering intensity. Paul looked up. He glanced toward the boy, at the still open door and back again

at the boy. He was puzzled. Through the stillness came the sound of the glee club's rehearsal across the way. "Hark! Hark! the lark"—the soprano voices were a little shrill. The door had to be closed. Very politely, but very distinctly, Paul said, "I asked you please to shut the—"

"Who do you think you are? Shut it yourself!"

No one was prepared for the surging hostility in the words. Class loyalties struggled to the surface. After all, this was a clash between senior monitor and—

"That's telling 'em!" But Tom Bates' approbation widened the gulf. Olson's face darkened and the blue veins on Peter Lyon's thin forehead showed clearly. No—this was something else—something that made them ashamed. The red-haired girl smiled coolly.

Paul's face had cleared of all expression. He had never seen this boy before, but what he saw in his eyes was quite familiar. Some place deep down inside him, Paul sighed. Still without saying anything, he pushed back his chair, rose, and walking softly, crossed the floor and closed the door. Turning, he stopped in front of the boy's desk. His tall, dark figure was not menacing, but the boy stiffened as though to ward off some danger. Paul stood a moment looking down at him, then said, "You're new here, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am"—the boy's pale face had flushed and he breathed as if he had been running—"and where I come from we don't take orders from your kind."

It was so still. Even with the door closed the glee club was the only sound heard: "With everything that pretty is, my lady sweet, arise, arise, arise!" Paul found himself listening and thinking "That's sweet music." He pulled his attention back to the boy and weighed each word carefully.

"O.K.—have it your own way, as long as you keep order in this study hall. Slip up there and—out you go!"

He turned on his heel to walk away.

"You wouldn't dare!" The boy's words came as a sneer—an insult.

Paul stopped and faced about.

"Why?" he asked.

The red in the boy's face was draining. His lips seemed pinched. But some inner force urged him on.

"Because I'm a *white* boy and you're a—"

Paul had not moved a muscle. Only his eyes had flickered, but the boy's voice failed him. He halted.

At this moment the door opened and Dr. Ackerman, principal of Somerville High School, stepped briskly into the hall. He had finally resolved to check this last study period. Reports had been most disturbing. He would today decide for himself whether stern disciplinary measures would have to be invoked. Coming down the corridor from the office he had been agreeably surprised at not detecting the slightest sound of disorder. As he neared the hall he began asking himself whether or not this was another case of "old maids' tales." After all the stories he had heard from teachers who simply could not "stand that noise" he could not but wonder. He had even paused just outside the door. He thought he heard what might have been a question and an answer. More noise certainly came from all the classrooms. However, even he was not prepared for the absolute silence which met him when he opened the door. One hundred and two pairs of eyes looked up from what must have been the most ideal concentration. There was no scurrying into place, no shuffling of feet, no coughing, no moving about at all. The monitor in charge was standing in front where he had the entire room well under his eye. He had probably been addressing one of the students—that was what Dr. Ackerman had heard. The principal beamed!

"Well! Well! Well! I must say it is a pleasure to enter such

an orderly study hall. And Paul—so you are the monitor!" He reached up slightly and clapped Paul on the shoulder.

Paul smiled—the strain was observed only by the guarded, watching eyes. But his smile was instantly reflected in a hundred other faces which lit up with signs of welcome and delight. Dr. Ackerman observed this touching tribute of regard with an appreciation which for a moment threatened to choke him. So this was the section reported as unmanageable. He ought to fire somebody! Dr. Ackerman spoke with real feeling.

"Boys and girls, this is one of the finest examples of student co-operation I've seen in a long time. Any teacher"—that was not enough—"any *principal* could be proud of being in charge of this hall. Here you students are governing *yourselves,* and following the lead of one of your own."

He gestured toward Paul.

"You admire Paul as a football star, a basketball star and a fine debater. All of us at Somerville High are proud of him. You show your pride not alone by cheers but by your actions. You do this because he's one of you—an honor student—all along the line. Fine work, students. I'm going to see that your senior monitor and every boy and girl in this room gets special notation for excellence in conduct."

He waved his hand in the grand style and was gone. They could not move for a moment. Then the exhaling of tightly held breaths came like the rising of many winds. Paul sank down into the chair behind the desk as if his legs would no longer support him. Books dropped to the floor and the shuffling of feet and buzzing grew until Paul said a little huskily, "Quiet, please—I'll have to give somebody a mark."

"You wouldn't dare!" It came from the back of the room —a high falsetto voice mimicking.

That did it. Laughter, hysterical laughter—laughter that loosed all the pent-up emotions—laughter smothered in arms

and behind hands—laughter that brought tears—laughter engulfed the hall, taking Paul along. He buried his head in his arms, stifling the noise as best he could. They saw his heaving shoulders, looked at each other and laughed. What a joke—and on Dr. Ackerman himself—what a joke! And Paul—good old Paul!

"Special notation!" gasped Dick.

"Finest example!"

They laughed and barriers went down, fears washed away and hurts were healed. It was good laughter. At last they were spent.

"If I live a thousand years—" Olson's voice was weak and hoarse. He wiped his eyes.

Paul lifted his head and he and the boy were looking at each other again. Then it became apparent that in all the room the only person who had not laughed was the boy on the aisle nearest the door. He dropped his eyes, his thin shoulders slumped and his lips quivered.

"I—I—don't think it's so—funny."

His voice was low, but everybody heard him. Paul grinned.

"It is, kid, it's awful funny." There were several final snickers. Paul reached for his papers. He spoke briskly.

"And now, everybody, let's get to work."

He looked at the boy, who straightened up, smiled a little shyly and said, "O.K.—Paul."

A beautiful calm descended on the room. Books were opened. Sandra puckered her lips over an algebra problem, Jake stared at the carefully drawn up second declension of a Latin noun. He seriously considered learning it. Dick sighed and reached for his fountain pen. The red-haired girl studied her fingernails. Yes—things were different. But—right nice! A little more time passed and—

The gong sounded.

Paul stopped at *The Valkyrie* office before going home. He

was glad to find it empty. Everybody else, he thought ruefully, probably had their stuff in, since the magazine went to press first thing in the morning. Well, he'd have to finish up his page right now. He closed the door firmly. He'd thought being Athletic Editor would be great. Gosh—it was a pain in the neck!

Miss Miller, the English teacher, found him sprawled over the desk writing slowly. She came in with a little flurry, her blue eyes brightening.

"Oh, Paul, I'm so glad you haven't gone. I did want to see you."

Had it been anybody else Paul would have been annoyed. But there was something special about Miss Miller. He couldn't have defined it, but—he stood up immediately and placed a chair for her.

There *was* something special about Miss Anna R. Miller. It was like the faint scent of lilacs or lavender or faded rose leaves and trailed after her. The remembrance lifted students over many a high hurdle years afterwards. Now, she looked up at this big, ungainly, dark boy—huge bony hands, separated from his body by long arms, great worn shoes protruding from frayed trousers—with such soft brown eyes and sensitive mouth, and thought, "What will he do with such a keen, fine mind in his strong, black body?" She knew she'd never had a pupil from whom so much would be demanded. Was she equal to the task? "Oh, if I could only give him wings!" She smiled at the thought and Paul smiled back.

"Paul, I saw you Saturday when you made that touchdown."

"Oh—oh—were you at the game, Miss Miller?"

"Of course. I never miss."

"It was—a good game." Paul had not expected this turn in the conversation.

"Yes, and you certainly carried the ball." Paul smiled, but said nothing. Miss Miller leaned forward. "And now I've come

to ask you to carry another ball—different, but just as important."

"What do you want me to do, Miss Miller?"

"You remember last year you played the butler in the senior play?"

"Oh—that." It was evident Paul was let down.

"Yes, I know," Miss Miller agreed, "there wasn't much to it. And there hasn't been much to the other parts you've played with the Dramatic Club—coachman, janitor, bellboy. But you always gave a good performance."

Paul grinned. "Opening and closing doors. I only had three lines last time: 'Yes, ma'am,' 'No, ma'am,' 'Yes, ma'am.'"

Miss Miller laughed.

"Well, this year, it's going to be different."

"Ma'am?" Paul's smile faded. "Oh—I couldn't—you see, I—no more plays—I—I just *couldn't*!"

"This year," went on Miss Miller firmly, "we're going to do sketches from Shakespeare. And I want you to be Othello."

"Othello?"

"Yes, you remember Othello, the Moor of Venice, who—"

"Yes, ma'am, I remember."

He knew the story well. He and his father had read *Othello* long before he'd had it in high school. Inside of him a record played—

> Her name, that was as fresh
> as Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black
> As mine own face.

He looked hard at Miss Miller.

"But—but—Othello is the—lead."

"Naturally." Miss Miller squared her shoulders. "You read the lines beautifully in class. That's what gave me the idea. You'll be excellent and Viola Diehl will be a lovely Desdemona—don't you think so?"

"Oh—yes—ma'am," Paul agreed heartily.

"I've already talked with her about it and she's really excited. I wish we could do the whole play, but we're taking scenes from *The Merchant of Venice, Macbeth, Othello* and a dance from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream.*" Miss Miller stood up. "We'll not start rehearsals until December. I know better than to try to get hold of a football man before Thanksgiving. But Paul"—she laid her hand on his arm—"I wanted you to know so that you could be thinking about it."

She went out, softly closing the door behind her. For a long time Paul sat gazing at the wall above the desk. He did not see the faded calendar or the ink sketch of the next *Valkyrie* cover.

He was walking the streets of Venice with Iago.

The janitor waved at Paul when he finally left the building. Outside the air was chill and biting. Lowering skies suggested the possibility of snow though it was only the middle of November. Paul drew in a deep breath. His blood tingled. Too bad football practice had been called off for the day. He would have reveled in hard, swift action, smashing blows of solid bodies and the rush of cold air on his face as he dashed toward the goal. He felt fine! Well, it was almost dinner time. That thought turned his feet homeward.

The comfortable new parsonage was only a block away. The Robeson family was enjoying a period of domestic content. True, Ben was not with them. Having graduated from Biddle College he had been ordained into the ministry and this fall had gone to Bayonne, New Jersey, to pastor his first church. But elder brother Bill, before going on with the internship which would make him a full-fledged doctor, was home—relieving his father of many arduous pastoring duties, and, caring for them all, presiding over the household, was Paul's only sister, Marion. She had graduated from Scotia Seminary, a

school for colored girls in North Carolina. She looked forward to following in her mother's footsteps and teaching in the schools of Philadelphia, but she knew her father and the boys needed her now.

They say all the Robesons looked alike. Big bones and broad backs of mighty Bantu men were tempered and drawn fine by the Indian strain in their copper-colored, straight-haired mother and gave them strong, lithe bodies that relaxed or moved at will. Marion resembled her brother Paul. She had her mother's clear, brown skin, she moved with her mother's swift grace, her nostrils were not so broad; but her forehead was as high and sweeping, her eyes as big and her smile as wide as Paul's. And she was taller than most of her young women friends. They accused her of "spoiling" Paul. "Anything he wants—anything!" Bill sometimes stormed. Marion would only smile that same slow smile and say nothing.

This November evening when Paul entered the house he could hear Marion moving around in the kitchen. Bill sat slouched in a chair near the window reading the evening paper. Three months before an Austrian prince had been assassinated in an unheard-of city in central Europe. There were no radios in those days and by the time people had located Sarajevo on the map Germany had declared war on Russia, and France was mobilizing to protect her beloved Paris. Bill read the news avidly and worried about it. He had planned to visit France some day. He wanted to see Paris. Maybe he'd like to practice medicine there—an educated Negro could live well in Paris. Bill re-read Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and talked with his father about that country called Russia. Of course, it hardly seemed possible those poor serfs could stand up against Germany. But how would it all end? The papers were beginning to say the United States would be involved. President Wilson was dead set against that. Yet—there was much talk of German submarines and what *might* happen.

Bill did not look up until Paul asked, half teasing, "Well, how's the war news?"

"Bad," Bill answered absent-mindedly. Recalling himself, he dropped the paper and said, "Hi, kid! You're home early."

"No practice today," Paul explained. Then, "Is dad home?"

"Yep, he just went upstairs."

"Is that you, Paul?" Marion called from the kitchen. At his response she came through the swing door and started laying the cloth. "I didn't know it was so late."

Paul was already halfway up the stairs. The business about Othello could not wait. He must tell his father.

"Now, don't go upstairs." Marion stopped him. "Dinner's almost ready. You can wash your hands and set the table."

Bill lifted quizzical eyebrows as he watched Paul descend the steps with evident reluctance.

"What's on your mind, kid?" he asked.

"Plenty." Paul winked his eye and grinned.

So it had to wait. It had to wait until they were all around the table, the blessing had been said and plates filled. Paul decided this was better, after all. He bided his time and then—

"I'm going to play Othello in the Senior Production!"

The effect was all he could have wished. Even Bill's fork stopped in midair.

"What?"

"Miss Miller asked me today to take the part of Othello." He tried to continue casually. "You see they're going to do some Shakespeare and . . ."

Reverend Robeson had lowered his eyes to conceal the pride beaming in them. He spoke with quiet precision.

"That is a difficult role."

"You mean to tell me they're going to let *you* take the part of Othello in a Shakespearean production?" Bill's voice was cynically incredulous.

"Yes—yes." Paul spoke eagerly. "They're doing part of several plays and . . ."

But Bill's voice cut like a knife.

"And what kind of Desdemona are they going to have?"

"One of the prettiest girls in the school—Viola Diehl. She's on *The Valkyrie* staff with me and she's—she's swell!"

Paul was watching Bill anxiously. He wanted to drive away the bitterness and hurt in Bill's face. He wanted his brother to be happy about this as he was happy. At this moment Paul was proud of his school, proud of his classmates and proud of Miss Miller. He wanted Bill to feel his share in this good thing.

"You'll have to work very hard," his father cautioned.

"Oh, I will, dad, I will." He was waiting for Bill's words. Finally they came.

"Well—maybe—we are—making a little—progress." The smile was a little twisted, but Bill's eyes were warm.

"Oh, I think it's wonderful, Paul, simply wonderful!" said Marion.

The weeks passed quickly. Hardly had Somerville recovered from its celebration of the high school's big Thanksgiving football victory than all the students were talking of nothing else but the Senior Production.

Miss Vosseller put her singers to work on a group of madrigals, and fierce competition was predicted for the part of Lady Macbeth. Sammy Rosenstein and Pat O'Larry were both good bets for Shylock. The parts of Portia, Macbeth, Othello and Desdemona were assigned without try-outs and the names had been posted with the announcement. It was generally conceded that the choices were good—though there was some heated dissension. All this heightened interest in the try-outs to be held the first Friday in December.

The juniors were not too happy. What could they do next year that would top this venture? And, they commented bit-

terly, they wouldn't have Paul Robeson. They considered it some sort of just retribution when, at the try-outs, Pat O'Larry won his place. Pat was a junior, while Sammy Rosenstein belonged to the senior class.

Paul soon learned his lines. Bill listened while he declaimed all over the house. Such enthusiasm was infectious and one evening he came in and handed the young actor a book.

"Here's a picture of Ira Aldridge, the Negro who played Othello in all the capitals of Europe seventy-five years ago."

Paul took the book eagerly. He studied the distinguished, draped figure. He frowned. He must have a beard!

Several days later he spoke about the beard to Miss Miller. She laughed and said, "Oh, that's not necessary, Paul. We'll work out costumes later."

But Paul was not satisfied. He decided to take this matter of costumes into his own hands. Christmas vacation came as a pleasant interlude and for a few days Paul stopped thinking about Othello—some of the time.

In 1914, the church was still the center and hub of the Negro community in any small town. And since for that community Christmas was the most important season of the year, the church and parsonage became a beehive of activity. Christmas had meant much to Negroes even in the deep south. There it had been a time when license was given and excesses condoned. Negroes could "knock off" from work, carouse and drink. And they took advantage of this freedom. There was more to this than many people realized. The story of the Christ child born in a stable, of Mary and Joseph refused a place in the inn, held deep significance for those who were denied so much. *Giving*—even one stick of hard candy—produced in them a feeling of unaccustomed opulence. They loved Christmas. As they migrated northward, however, enlightened ministers sought to guide this emotional response into constructive

channels. The ladies of the church organized big "church dinners," "Christmas baskets" for the poor were made up, a "Coal Rally" was probably announced for the Sunday just preceding Christmas when everyone was to make a "special offering" for the coal fund, or bring a basket of coal for the church and parsonage, and the Sunday School carefully listed every colored child in town who for any reason might not receive a visit from Santa Claus.

A couple of days before Christmas, Bill and Paul drove a sledge far up into the hills and cut down the largest tree they could find. This was to be set up in the church and hung with festoons for the Christmas Eve program. Prosperous parents would pile presents under this tree for their children. But everybody would attend, for after the program Santa Claus would miraculously appear, would wave bulging and beautifully wrapped presents in the air, would call out names inscribed by doting aunts and uncles and cousins and then, opening his pack, would dispense equally fascinating packages to every boy and girl present. No one would be forgotten or overlooked! Christmas was wonderful and it was at the Christmas tree that Paul solved his problem.

While he and Bill had been putting up the tree, and Marion, with the assistance of two other Sunday School teachers, was making cookies for the stockings, Reverend Robeson had unearthed in the attic the Santa Claus outfit which he wore year after year and which so delighted the children. For on this occasion, behind his mask, he disguised his full, rich voice, and, although only the smallest children were fooled, all of them were entranced. Santa Claus always gave a masterly performance, but this year Paul seemed to enjoy it more than ever. Then—something clicked. Here was the beard!

After that the holidays could not go quickly enough for him. It was very cold, which meant good skating on the pond. He spent some time trying to teach Margaret Potter to skate, but,

as usual, the efforts were of no avail. They ended with him pushing her about the ice as he had done the previous winter. This year she could stand up, at least.

With the return to school, rehearsals for the Senior Production speeded up. All sorts of objects began disappearing from Somerville homes. They were to emerge in the school auditorium as scenery and necessary props! Paul said that his sister was making his costume—which meant one less worry for the costume department which daily was in danger of falling apart.

Neither deep snow, sleet nor ice kept parents, relatives, friends, enemies and "first nighters" away from the Senior Production. As the time drew near the buzzing crowd gathering in the brightly lighted auditorium heard thumps, bumps and bangs coming from behind the lowered curtain. Fortunately, the early arrivals could not hear the groans and gnashing of teeth. Cold and unabating despair had settled down upon directors, designers and cast. The planned dress rehearsal had never materialized. From the classrooms, for the evening converted into dressing rooms, now emerged "strange and unfamiliar" figures, walking with peculiar gaits and muttering in a fashion never dictated by Shakespeare, except, perhaps for the "mad Dane." Prompters took their places, their own teeth chattering, while the typed sheets blurred before them and shook in nerveless hands.

Miss Vosseller's madrigal singers trouped out upon the stage in front of the curtain. "La, la, la-la-la-la, la, la," they warbled. They marched off. The lights were lowered. It was time! The curtain slowly lifted.

And then a miracle took place. It was the kind of miracle that happens many times—but one which afterwards nobody ever believes will happen again. The stage, which only a minute before had been a pile of rummaged junk, was now a courtroom in Venice, and people who had never before been seen in Somerville suddenly were there. The play began.

When the curtain came down the applause was deafening. Though the gloom was now shot through with golden gleams, there was no time for congratulations. Stage crews swarmed on and with much pulling and hauling were rapidly converting the Judge's bench into a Duke's throne. *Othello* was next.

This time the audience applauded when the curtain lifted. The Council Chamber, the Duke and his Senators in their sweeping robes, were imposing.

"Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor." The Senator's cue was loud and clear.

Paul made his entrance. The parlor drapes were wide and full and did not hamper his movements. From head to foot he was swathed in crimson, drawn in at the middle by a golden cord from which dangled two large and gleaming bulbs down the front. A turban, made from the two whitest and largest napkins in the parsonage closet, adorned his head, but it was the beard which struck the audience dumb. It was large and white and thick and almost totally concealing.

But now Brabantio, striding up and down the stage, was bewailing the loss of his daughter. His words piled up until the Duke, gesturing toward Othello, threw out the line:

"What, in your own part, can you say to this?"

Othello bowed very low. Then straightened up. His beard had slipped awry, but from behind the thick bush came inarticulate, muffled rumblings. Those on the stage stiffened. A few titters came from the audience, then—silence. Paul reached up, tugged at the beard. He tried again—

"Most—grave— My—noble—"

A few disconnected words seemed to explode from the bushy mass. Somebody laughed and there came from the wings a desperate whispering sound. Paul looked about wildly. His voice croaked—he felt smothered—the hairs from that beard were choking him. He saw Viola Diehl, just beyond the lights, waiting for her entrance cue. Her golden hair was falling about

her shoulders—her eyes were wide, staring at him in dismay. Good heavens! He couldn't talk with this beard on!

He bowed low once more, his back to the audience, and clawed at the beard. Skin came off with the adhesive plaster, but he did not notice. With a swift underhand motion he tossed the spongy whiteness far behind the set. Then, straightening up again, he faced the throne.

> Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
> My very noble and approv'd good masters . . .

The gasp with which the audience had received Paul's strip act was stilled. Even then his deep and slightly husky voice wrapped itself around those words with liquid magic. The dusky Moor spoke of "What a full fortune does the thick lips owe."

Thus, in the old high school auditorium at Somerville, New Jersey, Paul Robeson gave his first performance of *Othello* —without the beard!

5

NARRAGANSETT BAY

MARGARET CAREFULLY PARTED the thick bush and reached for another rose. They were lovely this June, more plentiful than usual. The front yard was her mother's greatest pride and her roses this year had repaid every effort. Margaret was picking flowers now for the table, choosing only the full blooms and breaking them off close to the stems. Here was a beautiful one!

"Oh!" The sharp thorn brought a cry. Margaret drew her hand away and sat back on her heels. She was pressing the injured finger against her teeth when she heard him coming. She knew it was Paul though he was still far down the street. The sound of his stick drawn along the picket fence played a rhythmic accompaniment to his footsteps. He was walking faster than usual.

"He's happy 'cause he's going away!" The thought sent a little stab of pain. The finger forgotten, Margaret jumped up and shook out her skirts. Deep down in her heart she realized that Paul's stay in Somerville was over. The four years of high school had been completed. For the second time they had graduated together. Now—he was going away. Leaning over, the girl added a few more flowers to her bouquet and turned to greet him as he came through the gate. Her voice was gay—the same hearty comrade.

"Hi, Paul!"

They were both tall for their seventeen years, healthy and well-built. But Paul was like an overgrown mastiff, cumbersome

as to arms and legs, while she, with braids neatly crossed above her smooth forehead and her narrow, ankle-length skirts, was decidedly the "young lady."

"Gee—it smells good!"

Paul bent down over the rose bush. The loveliness of this evening, the cool, latticed yard, with its fragrant blossoms and the girl standing there with her arms full of roses gave his heart a queer turn.

"Watch out for the thorns," cautioned Margaret. "I just stuck one in my finger."

"Bad?" Paul asked, his voice gruff.

"Um-um," Margaret shook her head. "I got it out."

Paul drew a deep breath and straightened up. He cleared his throat before speaking.

"Hope I haven't kept your mother waiting."

"Oh—no. We knew you'd have lots to do—today."

"I sure did." A tone of importance crept in. "Bill wants me to bring some of his books. So dad and I went downtown to get my ticket and check them through as baggage. Then I . . ."

"That you, Paul?" Mrs. Potter's cheerful voice sounded from the house.

"Yes, ma'am." Paul started up the porch steps, as Mrs. Potter called, "Come on with the flowers, Margaret. I'm waiting."

"Just a minute, Paul." The screen slammed behind Margaret, followed by her mother's "Child, will you ever learn to close doors quietly—like a lady?"

Paul couldn't hear Margaret's answer—if there was one. He sat down on the porch steps and leaned against a post. He could smell mighty good odors coming out of that house. He chuckled to himself. He was a frequent visitor here and Mrs. Potter often fixed nice things for him to eat. Margaret's house was a popular gathering place for the girls and fellows. In the winter they played the piano and sang, and when the

weather was nice there was the wide porch and big yard. But being "invited" to dinner was an event. And Margaret picking flowers, too, for the table. Decidedly this was something "special."

"Well, Paul." Mrs. Potter had come out on the porch behind him. He jumped up. "I reckon you children feel pretty cocky today. We was all mighty proud of you last night."

"Yessum," Paul spoke dutifully. Already the high-school graduation seemed far away. "It was very nice."

"You with your State Scholarship—all ready to go to Rutgers University. It's mighty fine for your pa."

"You can feel good about Margaret, too. She'll be going off to Normal soon." Paul grinned now at Margaret, who had joined them.

"Yes—it's the truth." The widow regarded her daughter with shining eyes. "I don't know what we old folks will do—with you young ones away."

"Aw, Margaret'll be back in no time—a schoolteacher. Imagine that!" And again he grinned at the girl.

"Come on; dinner's ready." Margaret preferred to change the subject.

"Gracious me! Yes, come in." Instantly Mrs. Potter was the concerned hostess. They went through the house and back to the big, shining kitchen where in one corner was set up a veritable festive board. Paul was sure this was going to be a dinner he would remember, as he eyed the crisp, brown fried chicken, creamy mound of mashed potatoes, and steaming, yellow ears of corn. And when to this was added large, golden hot biscuits! Well—!

Sometime later, the boy wearily pushed aside a second helping of lemon pie.

"No, ma'am, thank you. No more."

"You sure?" Mrs. Potter's eyes were bright. "Don't know

what kind of victuals you gonna get way up there on those islands. Better eat."

Paul shook his head. He sighed.

"Wish I could take it with me, but I can't eat any more now."

"I'll tell you, ma." Margaret spoke eagerly. "We could fix Paul a lunch to take on the train tomorrow. I'll bet . . ."

"That's just the thing. That's just what we'll do."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I didn't mean . . ." began Paul.

"Now, you shut your mouth, young man. I know you wasn't hinting or nothing like that. But Margaret's right. And, come to think of it, I wouldn't be surprised if Bill wouldn't like a piece of this lemon pie. I know he's not getting enough to eat in New York."

Paul laughed.

"Well—I won't say 'no.' "

"You going to be in New York awhile?" Margaret decided she might as well know the worst.

"Just a few minutes. Gosh, I wish it were longer. I want to see New York!" Paul's eyes were shining.

"You will some day." Margaret was very certain.

"Now, don't you boys get yourselves into any trouble fooling around there." Mrs. Potter's warning sounded all her fears of the "big city."

"Oh, Bill knows New York. He's been there lots of times." Paul's pride in his big brother sang through his words. "He'll meet me at the station, but I don't think there is much time before the steamer for Narragansett sails."

"We'll keep you both before the Lord." Then briskly, "Anyhow, I'm gonna fix that lunch."

Paul lounged on a bench while they did the dishes. The world was opening up before him—the time had come to stretch his wings. He was eager to get going.

"They say Narragansett's an awful swell place—the richest folks go there." Margaret asked questions.

"Yes, all the fellows make good money. There are dozens of big hotels and clubs—and they all pay well. I'll be in good shape by the time school opens."

"You'll be getting to know your mother s people in Philadelphia when you go to Rutgers."

"Yes, ma'am, I hope so."

"The Bustills are fine folks." Mrs. Potter spoke earnestly. "My Tom's old father used to talk about Cyrus Bustill. Course that was way before his time, but all the old settlers in New Jersey knew about him and how General Washington thanked him personally for bringing hot bread to the soldiers at Valley Forge."

"Where did he get bread for the soldiers?" Margaret paused in her wiping.

Paul explained. "He was a free Negro—a baker—and he had his own shop."

"They say he was a great man. Now, what relation would he be to you?" The widow peered closely at Paul.

"Well—he was my mother's great-grandfather. That would make him my great-great-grandfather."

"You gotta always remember that and . . ."

A shout from outside interrupted her. Margaret ran to the window.

"Oh, it's Stanley!" She called, "Come on in, Stanley!"

Stanley Douglass came through the doors, asking, "Is Paul here?" He spied him.

"I thought so. Well, the gang's on their way!"

It turned out to be a real party. They knew Paul was leaving and had hunted him up. They kept coming until the porch and yard were filled. Margaret's mother made lemonade. They sang and laughed and talked—about the possibilities of getting a job at Narragansett Pier, about New York, and football and

the newly opened moving-picture house "for Colored"—and even about the war in Europe.

At last they drifted away—mostly in twos—walking together in the moonlight. "Coming, Paul?" "Be along, soon." "Aw, let him alone!" At last, they were all gone—except Paul. Moonlight on roses! A lovely memory to tuck away.

"I'll miss you, Paul." She knew it meant "Good-bye!"

"I'll miss you, too, Margaret."

But how can a man miss a girl when the spray of the ocean strikes against his face, when for the first time he tastes upon his lips the biting salt of the sea, when the wide, blue sky curves above his head and the music of the waves sounds in his ears? Paul leaned far over the rail and watched the great steel prow cutting through the water. He breathed as if he had been running. He wanted to shout aloud. Bill, leaning there beside him, sensed his younger brother's excitement. He smiled a little wistfully. It is something to remember—that first glimpse of Narragansett Bay!

"See there." Bill pointed. "We'll soon round Judith Point. Then we'll be in the Bay itself."

They had boarded the steamer the day before in New York. Bill had found Paul backed up against the balustrade in the Pennsylvania Station. His eyes were wide and he was watching the milling crowd as if fascinated. Clutching his bag and several bundles, he had followed Bill into "the bowels of the earth" where they had taken the subway and been hurled down to the wharf. How Bill could have known where to get off remained a mystery to Paul—but they were at the right place. Coming up, they had dodged trucks, automobiles and taxis until they finally found their pier and the Narragansett Bay boat.

Paul had wanted to examine everything immediately—the decks, salons, lounge and tiny stateroom with its neatly made shelves of beds—one above the other—washbasin and water

bottle. Then he was back at the rail as the steamer slid away from the dock while the mighty panorama of New York unrolled before him. At first a bewildering mass, but then the jagged skyscrapers, waterfront slums, the Brooklyn Bridge, the wide mouth of the Hudson, Brooklyn and Staten Island and—the Statue of Liberty. He saw her as the long, last rays of a setting sun fell on her back—her face already in shadow.

A jazz band played down below, but for once Paul wanted none of it. They stayed on deck long after dark, until the last, faint glow of distant New York had faded, until lights twinkling in the darkness reminded them of fireflies, until the chill of fog drove them to their stateroom. Then, stretched out on the berths, they munched Mrs. Potter's fried chicken and the lemon pie—the last a little shaken up by travel.

"But good!" Bill grunted with satisfaction. "Boy, can that little lady cook!"

And in the morning Paul was up with the sun. Slipping down from the upper berth, he tried to dress quietly so as not to waken Bill. Bill had lain very still a moment, watching him through half-closed lids. Then suddenly he had laughed aloud and swung his bare legs over the side.

"Now we know how to get Paul up in the morning," he teased. "Put him on a ship. Everybody'll be glad to know there *is* a way!"

Paul grinned.

"Why get up unless there's something important to do? This morning there *is*."

They had come up on deck and found a sea of molten, jewel-crested gold beneath a sky still touched with all the colors of the dawn. The gray and silver mist on their right was the shore of Rhode Island, too far away to distinguish the continuous line of beaches, behind which lay still salt ponds. That was several hours ago. Now they were coming closer, approaching the Bay.

"Rhode Island's the smallest state in the Union. Texas could hold it two hundred times, yet it has thirty times as many people per square mile."

Bill was thinking out loud.

"Must be awful crowded." Paul spoke absently. The water was clearest green and quieter now. Paul was searching for any sight of fish in it.

"No, it doesn't seem crowded at all. It's laid out in the neatest, most precise sections imaginable. As if Roger Williams and the old Indian chiefs portioned it off lot by lot."

"Are there any Indians left?" Paul studied the land ahead of him. He began to know how Columbus must have felt!

"Plenty of them—alive *and* dead!"

Paul turned to his brother in amazement. He knew Bill always *meant* something by anything he said.

"What . . . ?" he began.

"There are two reservations—Charlestown and Burlingame—where you can see Indians listlessly living a life the white man has set for them, but there are many more who have married among the other peoples and have established themselves in the community. And there are still other red men who live among the hills and lakes and woods—almost as their forefathers did—only, of course, they are tramps and vagrants without homes or families."

Paul waited, saying nothing. Bill had not yet finished.

After a moment he continued: "The dead live in the names, customs and traditions all up and down the Bay country. The Narragansetts were once a powerful tribe. Roger Williams formed a pact with them. They trusted him and shared their land and products. But afterwards . . ." He shook his head, looking away toward the distant hills. "*I* think their spirits still flit around this Bay. I'm sure that's what I would do." Bill smiled whimsically and Paul smiled back, understanding. It was not hard to see why.

Ahead of them red cliffs like magic castles were emerging from the gentle undulating waters. Fleecy white clouds hung like gauze about their tips; the dome of blue sky seemed to shut out every chilling wind and from their base across the sparkling waters flitted white sails.

The steamer was approaching Newport, fashionable water resort where for generations Americans have played. Here North and South and Europe meet and stroll along the beaches, frolic in sheltered caves and lie on the white sands. There was a time when sailors from all over the world met here, when from its strange little wharves ships set sail for Mozambique, Fayal or Zanzibar. Even in winter the air is soft and springlike, tempered by the Gulf Stream. Northern blizzards seldom come and English ivy grows on old stone walls. It used to be a favorite nook for writers and artists. Here early in the nineteenth century Gilbert Stuart painted John Adams and here Richard Henry Dana corrected his manuscript of *Two Years Before the Mast.*

As they came nearer Paul could see the beautiful white villas rising above the water, the glistening beaches and many-colored pavilions. The two voyagers hung over the rail until a blast from the whistle behind them sent a flock of sea gulls scurrying in every direction. Then they hurried below and gathered their belongings. They were getting off here and would take a smaller boat across the Bay to Narragansett Pier.

"There she is—there's the *Canonchet,*" and Bill pointed to a slim white boat already filling with people. By the time they reached the gangplank Paul had noticed that there were many Negroes among the passengers. For the most part they were young and in groups. They wore the same kind of smart, summer-vacation attire as adorned the first-class passengers who, in station wagons and limousines, were being whisked up into the hills. A discerning eye might have detected a difference in materials, but cut and style were the same. Paul had

never seen such charming girls. He turned to Bill just as his brother waved his hand at one of the groups and called gaily, "Hey, there—Fritz!"

There was an answering shout and one of the young men pushed through the crowd to them. He was almost slight in build, but Paul saw that the silk shirt covered massive shoulders. In his dark face, black eyes danced; he wore no hat and his thick hair had been brushed until it lay in little ripples.

"How's every little thing, fellow?" Fritz's greeting was hearty, but the black eyes were on Paul. "So this is the kid brother?" He looked up all Paul's ungainly length. "Looks more like a battering ram to me."

"Yep—this is Paul. Paul, this is Fritz Pollard."

"Shake, kid!" He extended his hand. Paul's long arm shot out. "My God, what a reach!"

Pollard ran his hand up the arm, across Paul's shoulders and then snapped, "What do you weigh?"

"About a hundred and fifty-one."

"Gotta get more meat on you—magnificent frame . . . needs padding. They'll murder you!" He studied Paul, frowning slightly. "So you're going to Rutgers. And your brother says you play some football."

"I'm going to try out for the team," Paul said stiffly.

Pollard grinned.

"Um-un-um-um! Something tells me Rutgers is going to feel a shock . . . an awful shock. Be seeing you!" And he was gone.

Paul didn't know whether to be angry or to laugh. Bill laughed.

"That's Fritz Pollard for you—slightly cracked. But he's one of the best halfbacks in America. He goes to Brown University, and last year, when Brown beat Yale, Fritz made the headlines. I'm glad he's working here this summer. Fritz knows all the ropes and—as he said—you'll be seeing him!"

The next few days absorbed Paul utterly. He was one of the hundreds of new boys to be "broken" into the smoothly functioning but intricate "service machine" which made Narragansett Bay such a popular resort. Nearly all the "help" were Negroes and underneath the luxurious surface of sunny ease, highballs, music and surf bathing throbbed a driving, relentless, sweating, tireless life of color. Narragansett Bay was a gold mine for Negro college students. Hundreds of poverty-stricken Negro boys and girls successfully paid their tuition in the fall and had a little left over after a good summer at Narragansett. They came from all over the country. For the most part the boys were waiters and bellhops in the big hotels while the girls worked in laundries, tea rooms and check rooms. These jobs were considered preferable to private jobs in the ostentatious summer "cottages" and were snapped up first. Several Negro women living in Narragansett the year round have amassed modest fortunes by setting up and running laundries with this college help.

Paul had been extremely lucky to get on at the Imperial Hotel, one of the largest and most imposing on the Bay. Ordinarily, as a "freshie," he would have started much further down the line. But both Ben and Bill had worked under the head waiter at the Imperial and he was willing to give the "kid brother" a chance. It was not a case of "love at first sight" between them. The head waiter was dismayed and Paul was frightened.

As he stood in the pantry peeping out at the richly furnished dining room with its snowy white tables, gleaming silver and glistening glassware, all Bill's careful instructions as to pouring ice water, balancing a full tray and setting down hot dishes, whirled in his head. With terrifying clarity he saw himself tripping forward spilling consommé and *pâté de fois gras* down stiff bosoms and on fluttering chiffon. He groaned under his breath.

The head waiter also groaned—not under his breath—during that first week. This new boy wasn't too bright! But he proved himself so anxious to learn and so willing, he had such a nice smile, that even irate guests forgave his awkward blunders.

It was on his second whole day off that Paul saw Fritz Pollard again. He had learned where the boys went swimming and had set out across the back way from the hotel determined to join them. It was after he'd turned down Rodman Street that he saw a couple of fellows standing in the shade before an inviting, white house which had already attracted his attention. He had noticed that colored people lived behind the brightly painted green shutters and the big brass knocker in the wide doorway. Now, in front of the door on the square landing so typical of New England, the two young men were talking to two very pretty girls. Paul had just registered the fervent wish that he knew them when one of the young men turned and saw him. Paul recognized Pollard, who immediately called out, "Say, it's young Robeson! Come on over."

And so Paul met the Recklings—Ralph, a boy about his own age, then working as bellhop at the Country Club; Louisa and little Bertha, the two girls. But this was just the first installment. In the weeks to come of that summer and other summers he learned to know them all and through them all the magic of Narragansett.

For the Recklings were part and parcel of everything that went to make up Narragansett Bay—the crescent of the beach, the rolling hills, the Newport cliffs painted brick-red by blooming pimpernels, the tidal wave bringing in thick seaweed, and shallow ponds covered with water lilies. Their mother's mother had belonged to the Narragansett tribe. This grandmother had married a mighty Mohican. Their daughter, the Indian girl who was their mother, had rebelled against remaining in the reservation and had married a tall, industrious Negro from

South Carolina. Dwight Reckling had bought land and built a home for his Indian bride close to the waters which she loved so much. They had eight children and to their home came all the young, ambitious Negroes who were working their way toward a dream. For the Recklings had dreams, too. And in the years to come they captured them.

Now in her eighties, slender and erect, with piercing black eyes which must have sparkled in those days, this daughter of the Narragansetts talked of Paul.

"He was such a nice boy—so courteous and so kind. The baby (a granddaughter) adored him. He'd get down on his hands and knees to play with her. Sometimes he'd sing. . . . We called him 'Robey'" . . . Her voice faded and her eyes grew dim as she looked back into the past. Suddenly, her eyes flashed and she spoke briskly.

"And you know, he's never forgotten us, either." She was very proud of this. "Why, just last spring at the close of a concert up in Connecticut he came right down to the edge of the platform and he asked right out—to the whole audience—'Are any of the Recklings here?' Then he said the nicest things about us!" Her eyes were dancing.

"*Were* any Recklings there?"

"Of course—my son—he's a doctor, you know. He had gone up to hear him. Oh! We're proud of Paul Robeson!"

Those were happy weeks for Paul. Work soon became routine, and every day off, a time for high adventure. There were several battered cars among them—cars which often broke down and demanded much tinkering, but they were winged marvels to Paul. With Fritz Pollard he went to Providence—saw Brown University and rode through Roger Williams Park. Pierre, a wiry, copper-colored friend of Fritz's, often accompanied them. Pierre's queer mixture of English and French

puzzled Paul at first. At a baseball game, Pierre would shout "Frappé un home-run!" and "Attend un base on balls!" Then Paul learned that Pierre spoke French at home and had picked up English only after he had gone to school. Pierre was from Woonsocket, a little town in northern Rhode Island, which had been settled by French-Canadians. With Cliff, one of the Recklings, he attended an Indian powwow at Charlestown on one of their feast days. The Indians wore tribal paint, smoked long pipes and danced. But there was nothing joyous in the dance, and when Paul saw Cliff's face—he turned away.

The summer passed quickly. By September, he was ready for Rutgers. Fritz took his hand.

"Good luck, Paul. You've got a head on your shoulders. Tackle 'em hard, boy. I'll be seeing you!"

And it wasn't long. That fall Brown University played Rutgers—with Fritz Pollard halfback for Brown and that "new boy at Rutgers" playing tackle. Paul was following Pollard's advice.

They worked together at Narragansett other summers—and many more workers came. Among them was an attractive, Spanish-looking girl from Washington—a girl with bright eyes and a small square chin—a girl who was "going places." She talked little and worked hard. She was proud—a little haughty, perhaps, with the other girls. The boys she scorned—except perhaps a few whose feet were well set on the ladder—leading upward.

But that summer Paul did not go to Narragansett.

6

ALL-AMERICAN

COACH GEORGE FOSTER SANFORD closed the door of the Administration Building softly behind him and, with his back against the panel, stood a moment under the square Georgian lantern which marked the center of the low-pitched pediment. It was supper time and the tranquillity of the lovely spring evening was undisturbed either by turbulent flashes of red or green sweaters, white middy blouses, or unrestrained shouts. For at this hour Rutgers' students were gathered in various dining halls on the widely scattered campus fortifying themselves for continued onslaught upon this ivy-covered fortress of higher learning.

Rutgers University sprawls along the banks of the Raritan River, surrounded by the town of New Brunswick, New Jersey. It is the eighth oldest college in America, the only state university with a colonial charter. The steps upon which the Coach now stood had been set for Queen's Building in 1825 and that had been fifty-nine years after King George III had granted permission for a school in far-off Jersey. The colonies were a bit unsettled, demanding the repeal of a certain Stamp Act and the King had considered the chartering of this institution a rather nice gesture on the part of the crown. At the time King George was completely unaware of a tall young man named George Washington who was restlessly riding his horse over the broad acres of his Virginia plantation. For Rutgers University was founded in 1766.

Coach Sanford walked slowly down the steps. A bench

caught his eye and he sat down. He did not want to go home just yet. He wanted to think—to clear the jumbled whirling in the back of his mind. Absorbed in his own reflections, he chewed meditatively on a blade of grass while he looked at the small cannon and its pile of greenish cannon-balls, set in the middle of the grass plot immediately in front of the sedate, shuttered windows and smooth sandstone of Queen's. This piece of artillery had always seemed so out of place here, but this evening Coach Sanford had a mad impulse to stuff one of the moldering balls down the cannon's rusty throat and touch a lighted torch to its ancient locks. He smiled, realizing that the shot would hardly be heard as far as the village green, for that cannon was a trophy of a remote war with Princeton University.

In 1875 a group of Rutgers sophomores raided the Princeton campus and returned with a cannon, but not the one that Princeton men had boasted of stealing from Rutgers years earlier. Tempers ran so high that the authorities had to step in and reprisals were made on both sides. Rutgers got a new cannon. The bitter feud dated back to 1869 and the first football game ever played in America. That game had been between Rutgers and Princeton, and Rutgers had won. From then on Princeton men had sworn it would "never happen again." And though Rutgers' team had tried hard they had never again been able to defeat Princeton in any branch of athletics.

Coach Sanford dug his hands deep into his pockets. He drew a long breath. No, in all these years—it hadn't happened. But—in this year of 1919—it was going to happen! With Robeson catching the ball—with Robeson at the bat—with Robeson's long legs covering bases for Rutgers—Rutgers would win their baseball match with Princeton. It was in the bag! What a beautiful thought! For Robeson was the best all-around athlete in the country.

His mind went back to that afternoon nearly four years ago

when the tall, awkward black boy had reported for football practice. He'd been expecting him, for he had observed Somerville's crack team and he had known this colored boy had won a State Scholarship to Rutgers. Had he been white the boy might well have been invited to the six weeks' training camp at Redbank even before school opened. But the Coach had waited.

George Foster Sanford, a New Englander, belonged to that line of rational, tight-lipped Yankee who evaluate first and talk later. As befitted a Yale man his temper was scientific rather than humanistic. He had coached football at Yale University and had been head coach at Columbia University. He was rated tops in his profession. He was intelligent enough to know that he knew scarcely anything at all about American Negroes. At that time there had been only rare instances of a black man playing on a varsity team. He knew that a Negro on the Rutgers eleven would cause more than comment. The fact that Fritz Pollard was playing at Brown University would carry little weight. Brown was in New England—Rutgers was in New Jersey. There was a vast difference.

On the other hand, he was resolved that if this colored boy turned out for the team, he should have his chance. Sanford had no theories regarding a master race; he thoroughly believed in *masterly men*. He knew some men had guts and some men didn't. *If* a man didn't have what it takes, he, Coach Sanford, couldn't give it to him. He was neither an idealist nor a reformer. Already he had seen that the new boy could play football—what he didn't know was whether or not he had the right stuff in him.

Well, by George, he certainly had shown them! What a beating that seventeen-year-old freshman had taken! The team, already seasoned players, hard and fast, had concentrated on this "presumptuous scrub" (some had used another term) and were resolved to wipe him out. Day after day they

battered him, but he kept coming on. Nothing stopped him—a broken nose, a dislocated shoulder, a hand torn and mangled by heavy cleats—the Coach shuddered as he remembered! He had watched young Robeson. He saw that the lad knew exactly what was happening—saw him tighten his jaw and clench his teeth—heard him gasp with pain—saw his anger gather and mount into a fury of determination to fight on. The day he made the team the other players were strangely subdued. At heart they were neither mean nor cruel. They simply hadn't understood. They'd never known before a Negro would "keep coming." From then on he was one of them. He'd won his place.

And George Foster Sanford had reached his conclusion, from which he never wavered—Paul Robeson was a man, a master man!

In another part of the campus, on the top floor of one of the frat houses, Malcolm Pitt, senior, seated at the desk in his room, added another line to the foolscap in front of him, studied it a moment and then, looking up, abruptly became aware of the complete silence which surrounded him.

"Not even a mouse!" he murmured, wondering. Then that wonder gave way to alarm. He glanced at his watch.

"Well, I'll be—"

He pushed back his chair and, hurrying to the window, looked out across Holy Hill. Not a soul in sight. He had let a discussion of Kant's *Critique* make him miss supper! Was college going to his head in his old age? For a time he seriously considered the question, then shrugged his shoulders. Oh, well, Robey and he would just have to stop at the Lunch Room for something to eat. Robey wouldn't mind—nothing about that campus supper was going to detract from his enjoyment of a barbecue sandwich. Only he'd have to be coming along soon or they wouldn't have time before the program.

Pitt returned to his desk and sat staring at the scattered sheets. Then he ran his long, white fingers through his thick hair and shook his head. It was no use. Kant and Hume would just have to fight it out together. For the time being, he could no longer wrestle with the problems of the universe. Might as well take a shower and get dressed.

He didn't whistle in the shower. The novelty of having it alone only emphasized the fact that he was very hungry. He wondered what they were having for supper—fresh peach cobbler, probably. Darn it! As he enveloped his tingling body in the rough turkish towel the screen door downstairs slammed and heavy shoes clattered up the stairs. Soon came a loud yodel in the hall. Supper was over.

Pitt was donning his best suit when someone knocked on his door. He called out a cheerful "Come in" and looked up to welcome George Rule, big sandy-haired captain of the baseball team.

"Hi, Red, toss those things on the floor and have a seat."

The tall fellow looked around the room and back at his friend. He raised his eyebrows with the question, "Rudolph Valentino or John Barrymore—which one are you rivaling tonight?"

Pitt kicked a shoe under the bed and grinned. "Aw, go chase yourself!"

"No offense, friend." Rule lowered himself into a chair and reached for his chewing gum. "Who's the girl?"

Pitt left him in suspense while he carefully adjusted his tie. Then he laughed.

"I hate to disappoint you. I am merely going over to the Presbyterian Church to play for Robeson."

"And since when did the Presbyterian Church have a gymnasium or track?"

Pitt stared at him a moment, puzzled. Then the mist cleared. He explained.

"I said *for* Robeson—not *with* him. He's going to *sing*. Some important missionary from the wilds of Africa is speaking. They evidently thought it would be nice to have—one of —a colored person on the program. Anyhow, they asked Robey." He finished rather lamely.

"Sort of cause and effect." Red's attention seemed wholly taken up with the stick of gum he was unwrapping. He had murmured the words.

"Yes—something like that."

"Humph!" For some reason Malcolm Pitt frowned. It may have been because he could not place a certain untidy lock of hair. There was silence while Rule jawed his gum. He shifted it and said admiringly, "Sing! That guy can do everything."

"Does seem like it," Pitt agreed, "though of course his singing's nothing like his forward pass. But they like it. As a matter of fact, I think it's pretty good."

Rule's face had lighted up. He spoke eagerly.

"Say, have you heard the news?"

"Well, if you mean—"

"Our commencement game's with Princeton!"

"Princeton?" Pitt couldn't believe it. "I thought—"

The captain waved aside his doubts. "Sure—sure—but Robeson's All-American now. After Walter Camp selects an athlete it's just downright idiotic for any team to refuse to play against him. Even Princeton couldn't get away with that."

"Princeton!" They savored the word. "Well, captain, right now accept my congratulations. We'll tear the stripes off those man-eating Tigers."

"Now," warned Rule, "I'm not going to let my men get too high. Of course—" and he grinned. He chewed a moment. Then, "Do you know what I wish?"

"Sure," Pitt's answer was ready, "that the game was over and we were on our way to the Prom—what a dance that will be!" He lifted his eyes in ecstasy.

Rule shook his head.

"I wish there was a touch of frost in the air outside and that we were getting ready for a Thanksgiving football rather than a commencement baseball game."

The other boy nodded, comprehending. "I get your point. Robeson's got his four letters all right—football, basketball, baseball, and track—but football is his game!"

"I'll tell the world! Do you remember—" They were off—recounting the plays that had broken all precedents, had skyrocketed "Robeson of Rutgers" and had exhausted the vocabularies of sports writers.

Sanford hadn't pushed Robeson during his freshman year. The boy worked hard and early exhibited amazing ability for accurate diagnosis and planning. Sanford saw that he was to be that most valuable of players—one who used his head. Gradually he became the "defensive quarterback." With unerring instinct he opened up holes for his back on line plays, provided remarkable interference for his backs on end runs, took forward passes when the men for whom they were intended were some place else and handled the pigskin with the same sureness as a baseball.

In the fall of his sophomore year the Coach gave him the reins and let him go. Rutgers was scheduled to play the famed Newport Naval Reserves on November 24 at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. Rutgers campus seethed with excitement. Saturday-morning classes were cancelled. That day everybody in New Brunswick who could possibly get away went to Brooklyn.

This was long before Joe Louis had become the darling of Negro Harlem, but the people of Harlem had heard that one of their own would play in Ebbets Field that day. Their weekly newspapers carried Paul Robeson's picture. They took the afternoon off and headed for Ebbets Field. Columbia University students caught the excitement, and down on Washington Square in Greenwich Village folks laid aside their palettes and

chisels and became football-conscious. Along Broadway there was speculation as to the outcome of the game.

It was a cold and windy day. By noon buses and subways going to Flatbush were packed. Yale and Harvard men rubbed shoulders and Cornell's elbows stuck in Princeton's ribs. They, too, had come to see this game.

Roars greeted the Naval Reserves. There were shouts of "Callahan!" "Gardner!" "Black!" Rutgers' cheer leader gamboled and leaped in front of his pennant-waving cheer section, and though the students responded valiantly they seemed swallowed up in the vastness of the throng. There were no shouts for Robeson, but all along the benches were exclamations of "There he is!" "There's that colored player!" "He a Negro, all right!"

"It was really something." The two boys were still talking. Pitt fumbled in his desk drawer and pulled out a clipping. "I saved this from the *New York Sunday Tribune* of the next day. Louis Arms really went to town." They had read Arms' account before, but the black and sandy heads bent over it again:

"A tall tapering Negro in a faded crimson sweater, moleskins, and a pair of maroon socks ranged hither and yon on a wind-whipped Flatbush field yesterday afternoon. He rode on the wings of the frigid breezes; a grim, silent, and compelling figure. Whether it was Charley Barret, of old Cornell and All-American glory, or Gerrish or Gardner who tried to hurl himself through a moiling gauntlet, he was met and stopped by this blaze of red and black.

"The Negro was Paul Robeson, of Rutgers College, and he is a minister's son. He is also nineteen years of age and weighs two hundred pounds. Of his football capacity you are duly referred to 'Cupid' Black of Newport and Yale. He can tell you. It was Robeson, a veritable Othello of battle, who led the

dashing little Rutgers eleven to a 14-0 victory over the widely heralded Newport Naval Reserves.

"Veterans in football experience, versed in its fantastic and multiform arts, and popularly designated as the strongest football eleven in the United States, the thick-set Naval warriors came down from Newport upon victory and added glory bent. They had trimmed Brown and Harvard, and that the smooth-skinned youths from the banks of the Raritan could stop them —well, it was beyond belief.

"But it wasn't. The Navy's last transitory show of impressiveness faded when their signal practice was done and the referee's whistle blew on the opening quarter. For forty-four minutes thereafter Foster Sanford's ghost-footed machine ran the Navy's ends and pierced her bulking line, and, in other words, gave Dr. Bull, 'Cupid' Black, et al., as pretty a drubbing as you please.

"The Navy was perplexed and then stung by this amazing actuality; then it was enveloped completely in the tracery of Rutgers' perfected attack, and it fought blindly and wrathfully to stave off a lopsided defeat.

"As a thorn in her flesh the tall, tapering Robeson, commanding Rutgers' secondary, dived under and spilled her wide, oblique-angled runs, turned back her line plunges, and carried the burden of the defense so splendidly that in forty-four minutes these ex-All-American backs, who are fixed luminaries in the mythology of the gridiron, made precisely two first downs.

"Among the original tactical manoeuvres in Rutgers' attack is the calling in of Robeson to open holes for the back field. He is shifted by signal from left end to whatever spot along the line had been pre-selected. Thus considerable of Rutgers' line drives were put upon the basis of Robeson's superiority over Black, Schlacter, Callahan, or whomever he faced."

Pitt shifted his weight. His voice sounded a little hoarse. Rule, picking up another clipping, remarked, "Here's one calls

him a dark cloud." He continued to read: " 'A dark cloud upset the hopes of the Fordham eleven yesterday afternoon. Its name was Robeson, and it traveled all the way across the Jersey meadows from the banks of the old Raritan to the Bronx.' "

Dusk was gathering outside. Pitt walked to the window. Rule was staring at the clipping, no longer seeing the words.

"Pitt—" he started and then stopped. Pitt turned at the window. "What will he do now? In a few weeks all this will be over. Where will a Negro like Paul Robeson go—after he leaves Rutgers?"

There came a light tap on the door.

"That's Robey now," Pitt said softly, then he called, "Come on in!"

Paul's broad shoulders filled the doorway, though there was not an ounce of extra muscle on his poised body. His face, seen in the half light, was almost thin and his eyes seemed very deep and somber. But when his wide grin flashed the shadows vanished.

"Enter, Caruso," Rule waved him in gaily. "They tell me you're making a command appearance for the Brunswick natives tonight."

"Hello, captain. Hi, Mal! How's my favorite pitcher?" Paul stood just inside the door.

"In a bad way." Rule spoke before Pitt could say anything. "Rutgers is going to be minus one more hellova ballplayer next spring if Mr. Homer and I don't make better connections." He looked up at Paul brightly. "How about coming by tonight after the warbling and catching a few curves for me—you know Greek syntax? You Phi Beta Kappa fellows owe something to the common man."

"Take it easy, cap." Paul's voice was reassuring. "I'll be seeing you."

"Thanks, Paul. We'll be looking for you." Rule stood up and stretched. "Well . . ."

"Well, now that you have engaged a tutor for that Greek finals, what d'you say we get going?" Pitt had been balancing on his heels. "We've got to stop at the Lunch Room, Robey. I'm starving."

"So early in the evening? What . . .?"

"Oh—I missed dinner." He stopped. Wild horses couldn't drag the truth from him. They'd never stop razzing him. Kant—indeed! He finished, "I had to write a letter."

"What d'you know about that?" Rule appealed to Paul as they started down the hall together. "He must be in love."

Paul laughed, but at the top of the stairs Rule stopped.

"Wait. You two have forgotten your music."

"Oh, come along, chump." Pitt's long legs were carrying him down. "We don't need any music. I want food."

"No music? But—"

Pitt explained. "Robey's singing Negro Spirituals. They call for very little accompaniment—and he's taught me how to play that."

They struck out across the campus. As they turned down Hamilton Street they waved at Coach Sanford, who, head down and hands in pockets, had just turned the corner. He saw them and waved back.

"Good old Sandy." Paul's voice revealed his deep affection for the Coach. "I'm going to miss that guy."

"*You're* going to miss *him*—" And Rule was off again.

Coach Sanford looked after them and chuckled. There went his winning pair for June 10—Rule pitching and Robeson catching—what a pair!

As he strode along through the evening he softly called the roll for that game with Princeton—Baker, Garden, Talioferro, Rice, Orden, Miller, Whitehill, Rule and Robeson. That was it! And in his mind's eye he as good as saw the headlines which were to appear in the *New York Tribune,* June 10, 1919: "RUTGERS PROVES TOO FAST FOR PRINCETON.

Rutgers clipped the claws of the Princeton Tigers on the diamond here today when the Scarlet baseball team defeated the Orange and Black by a score of 5 to 1." They did it. His boys did it just as he knew they would!

A little later on that same spring evening a ripple of interest undulated over the polite audience assembled in the Presbyterian Church when that "Negro student from the college" rose and faced it. He began to sing and over all the church there fell a hush.

I gotta home in that rock
Ain't that good news
I gotta home in that rock
Ain't that good news
I gotta home in that rock
Hallelujah!

Years afterward, Dr. Malcolm Pitt, Dean of the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford Theological Seminary, said, "I believe now that was Paul's secret. He was firmly anchored and drew his strength from deep wells of consciousness within himself." He looked away and ran his fingers through his still thick, heavy hair—now showing a few gray strands. "Paul was my inseparable companion for the four years we were at Rutgers. Because of the accident of our names, mine beginning with P and his R, we were thrown together on the first day of registration and we sat side by side at Commencement. We were in all the same classes. He helped me with Greek and I used to untangle his trig problems. After a while other students began to accept our own idea of placement for scholastic standing. We claimed one or two in every class. Only," he smiled ruefully, "I must acknowledge usually Paul was one and I was two. In our junior year we were elected to Phi Beta Kappa and at Commencement both of us were admitted to Cap and Skull —Rutgers' highest scholastic honor. It would have been un-

thinkable for one to have gone in without the other." He was silent a moment, then, "Paul talked very little about himself. Even then he revealed more through his singing than through anything he said. Since I have been in India and know something about age-old peoples I believe I understand much I did not comprehend then. Paul was never limited by time or place —he had no desire to escape from anything. He strove only to be himself—at his utmost stretch. He might easily have been talking of himself in the words of 'Brahman'—

> "Far and forget to me are near,
> Shadow and sunlight are the same;
> The vanished gods to me appear,
> And one to me are Shame and Fame."

The Second Movement

ADAGIO

7

THE "B" THEME IN A MINOR KEY

HE STUMBLED A LITTLE as he took his seat. Quite unexpectedly, he could not see and the vigorous clapping of many hands hardly reached him. Underneath the voluminous folds of his Commencement robe his own hands were shaking. It was over. Evidently he had managed to control his voice to the end of his speech—but now—as from a great distance he heard the chorus singing.

Sunlight streamed through the stained-glass windows and added benediction to the blessings of administration and faculty, which this June morning of 1919 were proudly sending out another graduating class from Rutgers University. The war was over and these young men who had been privileged to go through that period of waste and carnage without interruption to their education now must assume the greater responsibilities for those who had not. "Frontiers are disappearing; new issues rise to plague our nation. The world needs men whose stride is wide enough to cross the oceans and who are high enough to see on the other side of mountains."

Paul heard the words and bowed his head. He was deeply grateful to his Alma Mater for these past four years. She had been more than kind to him—had taught and nurtured him painstakingly, had heaped upon him every honor in her bounteous store. Now, it was his turn. How could they know that all the tempo of his life had slowed until the movement seemed

to drag and bog him down? His father was not there to hear his speech. What could he do with his diploma when they handed it to him? His father was not there to give it to. What did it matter what he did afterward? His father was not there to enjoy it with him. His father was not there to go home to—to tell him all about it. His father—his father—who had worked so long so hard—had guided and admonished him so tenderly—had hoped so much. In all the strength of his strong body, with all the fleetness of his legs, with his Phi Beta Kappa key—with all they said he had—yet, there was nothing he could do now—for his father. His father could not know. His father . . .

A single sob escaped through tight-clenched teeth. And in the next seat Malcolm Pitt, understanding, laid his hand on his friend's arm.

Each week end Paul had gone home to Somerville. If Rutgers had a home game there in New Brunswick, or if they played near by, his father attended the Saturday game—whatever it happened to be. He loved college sports, and the team came to expect the weather-beaten old gentleman in his preacher's coat. They would hail him up there in the grandstand and he would yell back gleefully. What did he think as he watched his son's lithe body leaping here and there and finding its mark with sure precision? Paul thought he knew. He could hear his father's voice above every other when he made an especially good play.

But the old man did not intend Paul to neglect his studies.

"You went to school to study, not to play," he would say with mock severity. Then they would discuss classes and grades. The procedure was exactly the same as when Paul had been a little boy and each evening had made a report on the day's happenings.

"What did you do in school today, son?" his father would ask. And Paul would tell him something he had learned in

history, explain all about some difficult problem in algebra or translate his Latin lesson for the next day. The father's mind was alert. He read Latin well and he knew his algebra. Paul could not fool him. And through their discussions ideas became more fixed and problems cleared in his own mind.

The father frankly learned from Paul when he went to college. Curriculums had advanced since his days at Lincoln. He could and did often call Paul up short on historical data or on some literary criticism, but he listened with keenest interest when Paul talked of economics and psychology. Over much that Paul told him from classes in sociology the old man merely grunted. "Everybody *ought* to know that," he'd comment dryly. His father kept an eagle eye on his grades. He questioned the cause for anything under ninety-five. Once, when Paul had tried to explain that, after all, anything in ninety was *very* good, since nobody ever got one hundred, his father had asked quietly, but with a hint of sarcasm, "What's one hundred for if nobody ever gets it?" Paul had pondered the question and decided there was logic in it. Therefore, unless he did get one hundred there was certainly nothing to be puffed up about. The praise of fellow students or teachers never turned his head. In the back of his mind he had set up his father's standard.

That the old man was inordinately proud of him Paul knew well and he did everything in his power to increase that pride. On his Sundays at home he sang in the choir. He joined in and added to the social life of the church. Nor did he report all his comings and goings to his father.

Though Paul had become an integral part of the "white" world of Rutgers he in no sense allowed this fact to draw him away from the boys and girls of his childhood or to deprive him of the warm, rich living of Negro communities. His ability to make new friends and broaden his horizon was only equaled by his capacity for retaining the old and for enriching and deepening each experience. Fred and Warren Moore, who lived

across the street from him in Somerville, Stanley and Winston Douglass, brothers with whom he had romped and fished and skated, were not allowed to regard him now from any distance. He was still part of "the gang." Only now the gang was expanding. Winston, who had been the only other colored player with Paul on the Somerville High football team, was attending Lincoln University and achieving distinction in athletics there. So Paul was frequently seen on the Lincoln campus and formed new ties. Joe Moody, a good friend of his, who lived in New Brunswick, had a brother, Bob, also attending Lincoln. They often went down together. There was Charlie Chew and Arthur and Willie Moore of Princeton. They roamed all over New Jersey and in and out of Philadelphia—where, among the Negroes, Reverend Robeson's "promising young son" was mentioned with pride. It was remembered that his mother had been Louisa Bustill and that he was related to Robert Bustill, the artist.

Many of the girls he knew were now attending Trenton Normal School—Margaret Potter, Elsie Rogers, Lenette Hoover and Ida Goodwin from Atlantic City. Paul was always a welcome party guest, and any girl he took out was envied by the other girls. But there were rivalries even among "the gang." Frat pins were exchanged, hearts broken and mended between the first and last dance.

These were happy, carefree days for the popular Paul Robeson of Rutgers. The Moores in Princeton were never able to understand how he did so well in school. They couldn't figure out when he studied. He loved their big, beautiful home. He admired and respected the father who had developed one of the most successful businesses in Princeton and owned property on both sides of the street, and warm-hearted Mrs. Moore spoiled him shamelessly.

"The best eats in New Jersey." Paul would roll his eyes ecstatically and reach for another helping.

"You're going to miss the Owl," Christine would warn. The "Owl" was the last car at night back to New Brunswick.

"Oh, let him alone. A big boy like Paul needs more food than he can get in that college. We'll drive him over if it's too late." And Mrs. Moore would again heap his plate.

Paul would grin wickedly at Christine, who would stare at him coldly. The two sisters, Christine and Bessie, really adored Paul. Often they would gather round the piano and sing trios. Both girls played and Bessie had a clear, lilting voice. It was in their home that Paul met and completely succumbed to the fair Helen. That summer he lost weight and Mrs. Moore fretted over him.

But all this time Paul was growing up, was achieving stature both physically and mentally. There had been no period of rebellion against his father's guidance. That guidance had been too sane, too gentle. Without giving it much thought, Paul had accepted the general idea that he, too, would become a minister. Natural gifts of leadership, a fine mind, good character and oratorical ability which would sway emotions, these were qualities which Reverend Robeson asked in those who would lead Negro people on to higher ground. Such men, he believed, could best function within the Church. Surely his son Paul had all these essentials. And so he had dedicated him to the Church.

Now Paul observed his father and began to draw comparisons.

"I'm not as good as dad—I'm not good enough," he said to himself and shook his head. He realized there was nothing in him of the ascetic. His eyes were not fixed on another world—this world, as it daily unfolded to him, seemed increasingly wonderful. *Here* was his challenge. He loved life—he wanted life for himself and for all those around him. He had no inclination for cloistering walls—he felt that his home must be as big as all the world.

It was to Coach Sanford that he first voiced his doubts. "Sandy" had listened and his affection for the boy had deepened. Here was a man who knew himself.

"I understand, Paul. Your father will understand, too. This is not a matter of any lack on your part. Your father filled the needs of his day—you must fill the needs of yours." He was silent for a few moments, drawing on his pipe. "*I* think your people need men who know law—men who can secure their rights through legislation and before the courts of the land. Men like your father have led them out of their Egypt. Now their problems are different, and, perhaps, even greater because they are more complicated and less obvious."

"You think I would make a good lawyer?" Paul was immediately interested.

"I'm sure you would make a fine lawyer—or anything else you choose to be. And, Paul"—he looked at him steadily—"I'm sure whatever choice you make will be the *right* one."

He had talked it over with his father. If, in that first moment, the old man was disappointed, he had not shown it. He was conscious of the deep sincerity in all Paul said. And again he thanked his God for such a son. He knew there were far too few really good Negro lawyers and immediately he recognized Paul's fitness for such a career.

Just before he returned to college for his junior year something else happened which further sobered him. The war was drawing very near. His brother Ben enlisted and was appointed chaplain of the Fifteenth Regiment of New York State. Almost at once he went overseas. From this time on Paul studied maps and more carefully followed what was happening in France. Bill, meanwhile, had finished his internship at Providence Hospital in Washington and was eagerly awaiting his commission.

But the months passed very quickly. Everything seemed to move at breathless pace. His name was appearing in news-

papers all over the country; visitors began asking for him at Rutgers—it became apparent that Robeson was leading his class. He and his father began to talk of his going on to Columbia University Law School as soon as he finished Rutgers.

In May, Paul was summoned home to his father's bedside. He had been ailing a little for some time. The team had missed him at the spring basketball matches, but somehow, it never entered Paul's mind that "dad" would not soon be back in the grandstand. His father died on May 17 at the age of seventy-three.

Some time later Paul returned to school still dazed and bewildered. When June came he was one of the first to report for his job at Narragansett Pier. He was quiet and kept much to himself. On his days off he tramped for miles along the edge of the bay, climbing over rocks or dragging his feet through the thick sand. Cliff showed him old Indian trails through the woods. Sometimes they'd go off together—scarcely a word between them—their ears attuned to the myriad voices all around them: voices of the brook, the moss-covered trees and the hidden crocuses. Once they came to a pond covered with water lilies. Paul touched them tenderly and carried their beauty away with him in his heart.

When he went back to Rutgers for his senior year he was older, more thoughtful and very lonely. He had thrown himself into his studies with a kind of concentrated fury. Now—*now*—he must attain that hundred! That's all he thought about. He had no time nor desire to run around. At every game he'd find himself glancing up into the grandstand—searching for one face. He'd be straining his ears to hear that one shout of approbation when he made a good play.

Never, never could he have imagined that this morning, this Commencement morning—with shoes so carefully polished, and in his frock coat so well brushed—his father would not be there—his eyes shining—his lips tight—trying to conceal the

wells of pride which Paul knew would engulf him when this youngest of his sons graduated from Rutgers.

There was a rustling stir all along the line and Paul found himself on his feet. Then he heard his name, spoken slowly and clothed with weighty overtones: "Paul Leroy Robeson." He stepped forward. And in that moment when he stretched his hand to take the roll of sheepskin, in something like a flash of clairvoyance—he saw himself. He saw himself—one tall, black man, in flowing ceremonial robes, standing on a platform, surrounded by a sea of pale, white faces. He saw the many hundred pairs of eyes intent upon him—curious eyes—eyes probing beneath his skin and into all the folded layers of his brain. And then he saw he was not alone. They had peopled the platform with a great host—a host of dark forms, rising like wraiths from the past and assembling from many places. For they did not see him as one man, but as a race of men—a race somehow apart—a race which they had thought inferior and weak. Now —as *he* stood before them—doubt arose.

And then he heard his father's voice:

"To be worthy of the place on which I stand. To know that out of all the past I've come here for a purpose."

The mist rolled away. He, Paul Leroy Robeson, was not important. His loneliness and heartache was not important. It *was* important that a black man's head be held erect—that a black man walk out into life—with dignity.

Paul accepted his diploma, bowed, and faced the audience.

8

BLUES IN HARLEM

I hate to see the evenin' sun go down
I hate to see the evenin' sun go down
'Cause that man of mine
Gone an' left this town.
Oh! That St. Louis woman
With her diamond ring . . .

THE FULL-THROATED, fluid wail and the plunk-plunk of a cheap piano set up pulsing waves in the sultry, heavy air.

"How can anybody sing in this heat?"

Paul's thoughts were irritable as he came out of the subway at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue. Under the blazing August sun Harlem lay stripped of all glamorous coloring. The streets were littered and needed washing, the soot of many winters begrimed spotted walls; the sweating newsboy, his eyes lighting up at the sight of Paul, extending his weekly newspaper with a husky "Howdy, Mr. Robeson," was too thin—his face too old, and the woman's voice coming out of the studio window above him was very sad.

Paul bought a paper—though he had one in his room—and paused a moment in the shadow of the corner drugstore. Should he go in and get something cold or should he go on down to "Pop's"? It was too hot to think.

He'd been in New York over a year—studying law at Columbia University. He was carrying out the plan discussed with his father, but actually his student days and all they had talked about seemed far away. His classes at law school were merely interludes—periods between the ringing of a gong—hours that had to be borne. What seemed important was the ever-changing, strange parade of Negro life in Harlem, which somehow still eluded him.

Already, in this year of 1920, there was no place in the world quite like Harlem—an area of huge granite buildings against which leaned blackened sheds, substantial, monumental churches beside ramshackle tenements, a block of slums with people living in crowded basements and squares of palatial apartments commanding the finest view in New York City, beautiful broad highways and wooded parks, surrounded by gleaming rivers.

Negroes have always been in New York City, even when it was the Dutch colony, New Amsterdam. Later Negro soldiers from New York served in the Revolutionary War and in the Civil War. Many had acquired property and had become part of the great city. For better and for worse they were being woven into the multicolored pattern of this most heterogeneous of cities. Sometimes the fragile threads tore in the strain and in those early days there were frequent riots against Negroes, riots against the Irish and riots against the Italians in New York. But each year the city absorbed more people. The number of Negroes was comparatively small.

About 1910 northern industries began exerting pressure for increased production. Factories and shops needed more men. Fortunes were being made; the leisure class increased, demanding more servants. A mad race started to draw on the south's reservoir of black labor. All kinds of promises were held out—higher wages, better living conditions, schools, opportunity—Freedom! Negroes in the deep south responded with almost

religious fervor. "Up North" was the "Promised Land" for them. They made the trip to Harlem on foot, by train and by boat. Added to this stream came dark-skinned immigrants from the Caribbeans and even to some extent from faraway Africa. By 1920, New York's Negro population had jumped to one hundred and fifty thousand. Together with a few Chinese, Indians, Irish and Jews, they were forced into the blocks from 116th Street north to 138th and from Fifth Avenue west to Amsterdam. In less than two square miles were crowded peoples of diverse racial, religious, national and cultural origins, agrarian and urban—Catholics and Mohammedans along with "hard-shell" Baptists and "shouting" Methodists.

This was the Harlem Paul Robeson came to after his graduation from Rutgers University. He was not a stranger to the people of Harlem. They had read about him in their newspapers. Sports fans had seen him "tear through the line" at Ebbets Field. Dr. Du Bois, their dean of learning, had noted his scholastic attainments in the dignified columns of the *Crisis*. Oh, yes—they knew of Paul Robeson and they were proud of him. They set him on a pinnacle. And pinnacles are lonely places!

He stood this hot August afternoon looking across the wide stretch of Lenox Avenue. At night Lenox Avenue was an effervescent ribbon of color—lights, music, redolent eating places and many voices. Few cities can boast a finer driveway. But now—Paul turned away. The garish light hurt his eyes—his throat was dry. He entered the drugstore and the cool dimness was very welcome. The boy behind the counter looked up from polishing glasses and smiled a welcome as Paul wrapped his long legs about the stool.

"Yes, sir?" He leaned forward, waiting for Paul's order.

"Double order of ice cream—any kind." The voice was very weary.

Dr. Boutté, in the back of the store making up a prescrip-

tion, peeped over the glass partition and called out, "Hello, there, Paul!"

Paul smiled and waved his hand. Dr. Boutté frowned slightly as he continued his work. Then he paused again and this time without being observed studied the drooping figure at the counter.

"That young man is working too hard." He shook his head and again lifted his measuring tube.

What to do? Matthew Boutté knew what Paul was up against. From New Iberia, Louisiana, to the corner of 135th and Lenox Avenue is a long way. And there had been no air routes. Matthew Boutté smiled grimly. He had been one of the few Negro captains in France. He had seen men crack up. Paul Robeson had a big job ahead of him. He must conserve his strength.

At this moment he heard his wife's footsteps in the hall behind him. His face lighted. The Bouttés lived upstairs over their drugstore. She had come in by the back way, her arms full of parcels, a moisture like dew on her upper lip, the little freckles across her nose showing quite plainly. He helped deposit the bundles—precious drugs which she herself had gone to the wholesale house to choose.

"Hot?" It was a needless question. The black eyes lifted eloquently.

"It is terrible!" She spoke with the tiniest accent.

For the tall, handsome Mrs. Boutté was a Creole, born and reared in New Orleans. She had graduated from Fisk University. After marrying the young doctor and coming to New York she had studied pharmacy. Together they were building a prosperous business in Harlem.

"Paul Robeson's up front." The doctor kept his voice low.

"Ah—indeed! I must speak to him." She patted her hair.

"He doesn't look well." Still the low tone.

Mrs. Boutté wrinkled her brow for a moment. Then shrugged her shoulders.

"But—*mon Dieu*! This heat!"

"Yes—I know—still—I've been thinking."

His wife twitched his ear.

"And—*mon cher*—when you think—something happens. What now?"

This time the doctor lifted his eyes.

"I'm still—thinking. It is possible this young man is lonely. He needs warm ties. There is, for instance, our fraternity and —other things."

Paul straightened up when he saw Mrs. Boutté. With the cooling ice cream trickling down his throat he was feeling much better. He stood until, with a little tinkling laugh, she indicated that his ice cream was melting.

"And why are you in New York this hottest of months? Everybody goes away, you know."

Paul smiled gallantly.

"Not *everybody*." Then he added, "I'm taking summer courses at Columbia."

"So that's what you're doing." The doctor had joined them. "When are they over?"

"Next week. And I'm not sorry."

"You're probably going too hard." Dr. Boutté's tone was cautious.

Paul shook his head. "There's nothing hard about the work," he explained. His face clouded. "It's just . . ." He hesitated.

"Law is a wide field. We need Negro lawyers." The doctor was studying him.

"Yes—I know. But I keep thinking—what am *I* going to do in it? Where can I go? What will I do—carry an empty briefcase—bail drunks out of police courts—give advice to the

lovelorn—find false evidence so that weary husbands can get rid of nagging wives?" His voice was scornful.

"What is it you want to do?"

Paul was silent a moment, running his spoon around the emptied dish. Smiling at the boyish gesture, Mrs. Boutté motioned to the clerk to serve him again. Finally Paul spoke, slowly.

"I want to plead the case of misunderstood and oppressed peoples before the highest courts of the land—I want to help create laws which will guard their homes and their children—I want to legislate those laws—I want to speak out so the whole world will hear!"

With the force of long-suppressed emotion he brought his clenched hand down upon the counter. Then the blaze died in his eyes, the fingers relaxed and futility muffled his voice as, looking away, he asked, "And how can a Negro do that?"

The boy set another heaping mound before him. With a little gesture of impatience, Paul shook his head and started to push it away.

Mrs. Boutté laid her hand on his arm. Her voice was gentle.

"Eat it, Paul."

He obeyed and little by little they were able to cheer and lighten his spirits. Not by words alone, but by that deeper, intangible communication of understanding and wholehearted sympathy. As he swung down the street an hour later his step was light and buoyant. Maybe he *had* been working too hard. He'd follow the doctor's suggestion and go down to Atlantic City when summer school closed. He could easily get a job and there would be hours off for bathing and lying in the sun. Also, there was a girl. Yes—he was tired, muscle-bound and worn out, that's all. Meanwhile, he was approaching "Pop's." He decided to stop by and shoot some pool.

Jessie Ship's "Pool and Lunchroom" was about the nearest thing to a club Harlem boasted. It lacked the leather chairs,

abundance of good literature and uplifting propriety of the Y.M.C.A., but offered instead more congenial companionship, a safer refuge from feminine intrusion, and a master mind, affectionately known as "Pop." For the proprietor was a trusted confidant, the source of all wisdom and the mediator in disputes. Pop's advice to young men was always strictly moral; his code of ethics was high and he was undoubtedly one of the originators of the phrase "Crime does not pay." No bootleg liquor could be had at Pop's and when one ordered a chicken sandwich it turned out to *be* chicken—not veal.

The place was two steps below the sidewalk and Paul had to duck to avoid the low door. Inside it was clean and inviting, but at the moment nearly empty. The crowd would be along later. Pop hailed him from the steaming stove in the back. Hot as it was, two customers had just ordered barbecue sandwiches and Pop was seeing to it that the pepper sauce had exactly the right consistency.

"How's every little thing, young man?"

"Fine, Pop, fine. How's things with you?"

"Can't kick. No, sir, could be a lot worse." Pop was blinking his eyes and waving his fork mysteriously. Paul hesitated a moment and then went over to him.

The two men at the table, their heads close together, had looked up at the sound of Paul's big voice. A quick glance was exchanged between them and then they stared at him—missing nothing. They spoke rapidly and in lowered tones.

"Just the type!"

"Did you hear that voice?"

"Wonderful! He's our man!"

"But where have I seen him before?"

The question hung suspended in midair between them while they looked at each other. Suddenly, the slighter of the two snapped his fingers with a sharp click and exclaimed, "I know! Sure, that's who it is!"

The second man leaned forward eagerly.

"It's Paul Robeson, the football player!" He let out his breath and leaned back, beaming.

Before the second man could say anything Pop had arrived with the sandwiches and two moist bottles. He hovered over them with flattering solicitude.

"Just sing out if you want anything else, gentlemen." Pop was turning to leave.

"Oh, Pop," one of the men asked casually, "who is the young man who just came in?"

"That, Mr. Sissle, is Paul Robeson. He comes here often." Pop made the announcement proudly.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Blake here thought he recognized him. Thanks, Pop." When the old man was out of earshot, Sissle spoke softly, without looking across the table. "Tough luck, Eubie—some more tough luck."

Eubie Blake drew back. It was as if he had thrown up a defense against some hurt.

"What do you mean by that? We need a man like him—and he's finished with Rutgers."

Sissle smiled, but there was sarcasm in his voice.

"What makes you think Paul Robeson would play in our show?"

"And why shouldn't Paul Robeson play in the best show that's ever been on Broadway?" Blake kept his voice low, but his eyes flashed. "Where will he get a chance to sing such music or work with finer fellows than Miller and Lyle? Where, I ask you? How do I know he's *good* enough to play in *Shuffle Along?*"

Noble Sissle sighed.

"Listen, Eubie, we're not on Broadway yet. *I* know the music's great—*I* know the show's good—*I* know it will be a hit—if and when and wherever—we get open. But Paul Robeson doesn't know all this. Neither, according to all evidences, does

anybody else. Except, of course," he added hastily, "our own gang."

Blake had bitten into his sandwich and was chewing morosely.

"Besides," Sissle continued, "Robeson's got some kind of a career ahead of him. Seems to me he's going to be a lawyer or something. Anyhow, he comes from a preacher's family and, well—you know what those folks think of stage people."

"You make me sick!" Blake swallowed, almost choking. "J. Rosamond Johnson's father was a preacher, wasn't he? And your father's a preacher."

"Yes—that's right. That's why I know." Sissle grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

Blake took another bite of the sandwich. It turned to ashes in his mouth. What Sissle said was true, of course. Every producer on Broadway had turned them down. His fingers twitched. He knew he had written good music—tuneful music—colorful music. Maybe, if they could get a fellow like Paul Robeson to sing it—maybe—? But did they even know he could sing? Aw, what was the use!

Meanwhile, Pop was whispering his information to Paul.

"They're two top musicians—trying to put on an all-colored show. Eubie Blake wrote the music and I hear it's great."

Pop added other bits of theatrical lore as he sliced his bread and arranged it in neat rows. Paul listened with only perfunctory interest. He had taken down a cue from the rack and began to chalk it carefully. Might as well practice a few shots.

The theater was a world apart from his environs. It belonged to the glittering and unfamiliar pageantry of New York. Negroes who had managed to capture the attention of "downtown" were regarded with awe. Paul had been tongue-tied when he was introduced to J. Rosamond Johnson, composer and showman—a Negro who had written songs for Anna Held, been associated with Williams and Walker and had put on

shows in London for Oscar Hammerstein! The boys at Pop's played Bert Williams' records over and over and Paul had sensed the flickering spark of genius which had burned itself out behind the blacked face. He hoped better days were coming for such talent. Every time he went to Harlem's own theater, the Lafayette, and watched Marie Lucas conduct her all-girl orchestra, he thought it probable. He'd seen a couple of plays given by the stock company at the Lafayette and he remembered at least two names—Abbie Mitchell, a beautiful woman, and a slender, wiry dark man called Charles Gilpin. They certainly were good.

Paul glanced again at the two musicians who were now taking only fitful bites between long pulls on their cigarettes. They seemed to have finished their discussion for they were no longer talking. He hoped they'd get their show on all right. No doubt they'd worked hard at it. He laid down the cue, disappointed that none of the fellows had showed up. Guess he'd go. At that moment he saw Fritz Pollard standing in the doorway. Paul let out a shout.

"Fritz! You old ground hog!"

Pollard squinted his eyes. The sun had blinded him, but there was no mistaking that voice. They clapped each other on their backs while Pop looked on beaming. There was scraping of chairs and calling for sandwiches and something cold. Then, both of them talking at once, the two friends began to catch up on all that had happened since they had last seen each other. Gradually it developed that Pollard was doing the talking. Paul's energies seemed to have ebbed. Pollard pushed aside his emptied plate and, leaving a sentence unfinished, looked hard at Paul.

"Well?" His eyes compelled an answer.

Paul rubbed his hand across his forehead as if to recall his thoughts. The sight of Fritz had brought back so many things —the smell of cold crisp sunshine and eleven men jogging out

to the middle of a wide open field; the sharp, barking voice of Sandy and the close huddle of hard, firm bodies; the feel of the ball in his hands—the roar of the crowd . . . Paul shook his head. He looked across at Fritz and his eyes smiled.

"So—you're football coach at Lincoln. What a break! What kind of team will you have this fall? Tell me all about it." Paul leaned forward eagerly.

Pollard did not answer immediately. He had noted the telling gesture of fatigue. He was seeing for the first time the deep shadows in Paul's face. When he spoke it was to ask a question.

"How would you like to go down and help me? I need an assistant."

"I? I—coach at Lincoln?"

"Sure. We'd whip up some sure-fire teams. And I think a little vacation from Blackstone will do you good."

"How do you know they'd take me?"

Pollard laughed. "Paul, your modesty would be touching if it weren't simple. Any school would fall all over itself to take on an All-American. What I'd better be worrying about is my own job!"

But Paul was up—his eyes shining. Here was the answer! He'd take a little time off—he could make it up later. He flexed his muscles. Gosh, they were tight! But he'd get in condition again—he could see the field, and he could see his boys out there—hitting the line—hard!

He told Pop; he hurried Pollard, urging that they had "things to do." They went out, laughing, in high spirits, Pollard declaring, "We're in New York, Robey. Let's turn out the town!"

Sissle and Blake looked after them and then at each other.

"Well—there goes our type."

"Yeah—to teach overgrown morons the high art of falling on a ball—in the mud."

"I should say *there he goes*—is correct."

9

TIES THAT BIND

DECEMBER CAME IN with a heavy flurry of snow. By nightfall New York was enveloped in a thick blanket which as effectively covered grimy tenement walls near the river as it did the tinted tiles of penthouses above Park Avenue. In either case the buildings seemed to melt into a gray, mobile sky of shades and shadows and to send out into the white, whirling mass steady beacons of warm light.

As Paul turned off the avenue into 138th Street, the noises of the city became muffled and, no longer bowed before a driving wind, he was able to shift the weight of the two bags he was carrying and straighten his shoulders. For here the snow fell down gently, noiselessly shutting in the stately brick dwellings. Straight and slender the houses were, slightly withdrawn from the street, with their arched entrances shadowed by latticed porticoes like raised lorgnettes through which the world might be regarded with supercilious disdain. These were indeed proud houses—designed by a famous architect—from which the original owners had fled before the rising tide of Negro Harlem. But a casual passer-by would have noticed no difference. For though the complexions of the dwellers had changed to brown and tan, the houses presented the same impressive fronts. The people who lived in them had some money, and, for the most part, good taste. They saw to it that "the street" maintained its "tone." This was before someone dubbed the street "Strivers' Row." It was before Carl Van Vechten turned the spotlight of

New York Café Society "uptown" with his best-seller about Harlem.

Now, on this winter evening, Paul looked in vain for anybody to give him directions. The block was deserted. Nor could he make out the house numbers. He was looking for "203." The bags were getting heavier at every step, but he trudged on a little farther until he saw a shaded light in an entrance on the other side. "That's probably it!" He ploughed through the snow crossing the street and then saw the little emblazoned panel bearing the words "Eta Chapter House." He had been right. This was the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity House, where as a fully initiated member he was now entitled to live.

It had happened down at Lincoln University that fall. Alpha Phi Alpha men had won out over other fraternities in capturing the renowned Paul Robeson. The young assistant coach had been unaware of the tug-of-war which had been waged over him. All he knew was that one morning—after a most amazing evening, topped off by a feast of fried chicken—he had awakened to find himself a full-fledged Alpha man. Now, according to the Alpha Historian, he was a member of the oldest Negro college fraternity. A roll call of "prominent members" appearing in *The Sphinx* (official organ of Alpha Phi Alpha) reads like a combination of Social Register, National Professional Men's Club, and Carter Woodson's "Negro History."

Paul grinned complacently as he pressed the bell. This was going to be pretty nice!

The boy who opened the door waited respectfully until he was addressed. Freshmen, who are so fortunate as to become pledged to Alpha Phi Alpha, serve their apprenticeship most humbly—referred to sometimes as "dogs" and sometimes in less favorable terms! The big man at the door had a nice face.

"I'm Paul Robeson. I think—I hope you're expecting me." And his smile was beautiful.

"Oh—yes—yes—sir—yes—come in—sir—I'll—sir—" The pledge stammered in his excitement. Paul Robeson! Gosh! He reached for the shabby bag and stumbled over the door mat. His foot encountered a bit of melted snow in the vestibule and, with a great clatter, he fell sprawling!

"What's going on down there? Brown! Brown!" a voice from upstairs bellowed. The little fellow quailed. Paul reached over and, taking him by the arm, winked. Then he called out and his great voice boomed through the halls:

"It's nothing. We're getting my bags in. This is Paul Robeson!"

Instantly all along the hall doors popped open and down the stairs and out of the rooms they came. "Puss" Saunders, whose father was president of Shaw University; Jimmy McClendon, tall, lean and handsome, "Kid" Collins and "Jay" Clifford, fellows whom he had run around with in New Jersey, now in New York starting their professional careers. They clapped him on the back, wrung his hand, welcomed him to the House. The pledgees stripped him of overcoat, hat, overshoes and vanished with his bags. In the midst of the hullabaloo the door opened again, admitting a snow-bedecked figure, his arms filled with paper bags. Paul stared in amazement.

"Haily! I thought I left you down at Lincoln!"

Frank Hailstolk shook himself, scattering snow in every direction. He grinned.

"Well, well! Look what Santa Claus sends us. It's Robey!"

"But what are you doing in New York?" Paul persisted.

Hailstolk was shedding his overcoat. He nodded at the group.

"Tell him something, fellows." Then to Paul: "Men do come to New York, you know—for week ends." He winked. "While you were philandering around in Philadelphia I came straight through to the big city. Got here this morning."

"That's how we knew you were on your way." It was Harry Bradge talking, also a law student at Columbia. Now he spoke enviously. "Lucky *hombre*—to be able to chuck law for a whole semester and coach football!"

"And did Lincoln love it!" Hailstolk was a senior at Lincoln University and felt justly proud of his share in getting Paul to "go Alpha."

Paul chuckled. "Well, I'm back now and ready to get down to hard work." It was true. He felt fine, ready to tackle anything.

They had drifted into the lounging room. Hailstolk eyed his damp packages with some misgivings. "Better get rid of these," he mumbled as he backed out through the double doors. But someone else had been eying those packages. Now, Rudd, the House Manager asked sternly, "What's in those packages?" It was the voice of authority.

Hailstolk looked back brightly, his foot already on the bottom step.

"Oh, just some things I picked up."

Edward Rudd had been a lieutenant with the Expeditionary Forces in France—which was one of the good reasons he had been made House Manager. He went toward Hailstolk.

"Now look here, Haily, you're not going to be eating cheese and crackers in bed. I won't have it!"

"Who said anything about cheese and crackers?" Hailstolk's tone was weighted with injured innocence. Paul's laughter broke in on Rudd's reply.

"You can't win, Haily. Hand over that bird seed and let's find some real food. I'm starving."

It was all so good—this "homecoming"! Paul felt his heart warm toward all these fellows. They were his brothers. It was like Ben and Bill multiplied many times.

There was laughter and further suggestions as Hailstolk gloomily gave the packages to a waiting pledge.

"I suppose I can keep these apples." He spoke with quiet dignity, holding up a large and lumpy bag.

"Of course," the House Manager was very reasonable. "The other things will be placed in the kitchen cupboard—where you can help yourself any time you wish."

"Not that I should even suggest the possibility of any *rat* getting there before me." Hailstolk spoke with grim emphasis.

Then they clambered up the stairs—yelling back and forth from their rooms as they changed clothes and planned a big evening. Already, Christmas was in the air. All of them were remaining in New York for the holidays, for this year the national convention of Alpha Phi Alpha would meet here, with Eta Chapter the host. There would be big doings! Harlem society would do itself proud! "Just you wait and see, Paul!" "Nothing like it!" Life seemed pretty good to these young men. A war had been fought to make the world "safe for democracy." The older ones had been in it. But they were back home now "on their way." They had not yet felt the ball-and-chain weight of Depression.

There were people in Harlem not so fortunate. They had no name for it yet. They only knew that things weren't going so well. Undoubtedly it was tied up with this matter of being "temporarily laid off." The bosses promised to call just as soon as business picked up, but meanwhile extra jobs seemed increasingly difficult to find. Then, too, there were so many ex-service men around—and they always got sore if they didn't get their old jobs back. Well, if they did, that meant laying somebody off. And prices stayed up. The first of the month was getting to be a nightmare in Harlem. The rent ate up everything. Evictions were taking place. Women were beginning to refer to their men as "shiftless"—and that cut deep and made tempers short.

It was Jimmy who suggested the rent party. Having consumed steaming bowls of Pop's succulent beef stew, they were considering the next move.

"A rent party? What's that?" Paul had been asking questions all evening. Much transpires in a big city during a few months' absence.

"Stated briefly"—Bradge's legal bent rendered him precise—"it's a get-together for the purpose of raising money to pay one's rent."

Jimmy was fishing in his pocket. He drew out a slip of paper.

"Here's the invitation. Somebody left it at the House this morning." He read:

Come on, fellows,
An' have you a time
Music and good eats
For just a few dimes.

And on the other side with the address it says:

I got the blues—the
Low-down, rent-man blues.

"Good heavens! I never heard of such a thing. Let me see it." Paul took the slip and studied it.

"Man, you are in Harlem! Who ever heard of *Harlem?* I've never been to one of these parties. They're new. But, what better time than the present?" Hailstolk was already on his feet.

Collars turned up, they set out to find the rent party. The address was not far away, on 135th Street, across Lenox Avenue. It had stopped snowing and already traffic was cutting ugly black gullies in the street, sidewalks were being cleaned and had in some places become slippery grime.

The unkempt, dilapidated apartment house may have seen better days. They pushed by the garbage can in the front entrance and climbed narrow stairs to 4C. There was no difficulty in locating the party.

"Somebody's beating that piano to death!" Collins played a little himself and he recognized superior craftsmanship.

"What a smell!" Saunders was ready to go somewhere else.

The crowd spilled out into the smoke-filled hall where the appearance of five well-dressed young men caused quite a stir. Each dropped fifteen cents into the broken dish extended to them by the fat woman at the door, who made more room by the simple process of shoving those who were not dancing into the kitchen, where a pot of pigs' feet simmered on the stove—further enriching the air!

A single, shaded light bulb hanging over the piano threw the slouching, lanky figure with his huge hands and skinny wrists into sharp relief. With one foot he beat out his rhythm while he played. His head was lowered over the keys. He might have been alone in the room. Nothing else could be clearly discerned. Beyond that circle of light, dark bodies, tightly knit, swayed and squirmed and writhed in the gloom. There was no talking or laughter among them. They danced silently and intently. A thick pall of smoke hung everywhere.

"Better hang onto your coat," whispered Hailstolk.

Paul nodded. As his eyes adjusted themselves to the dimness of the room, Paul was bracing himself against the waves of awareness which beat against his consciousness. The choking smoke, the smell of sweating bodies, stunted by ignorance, the pinched face of poverty! He could look over their heads because the occupants of the room were small, undersized, thin and stooped—young people, for the most part, somehow beaten down, half-starved, hollow-chested. The girls, thin, cheap dresses drawn tight across narrow backs, skinny legs, slick, shining heads and hungry eyes looking out of pert little faces; the boys, heavy, baffled, defiant, greedy—taking this little that life sent—drowning, snatching at straws, and carrying the straws down with them. Straws—driftwood of Harlem—petty underworld! So this was a rent party! They'd come to help pay the rent—to toss their fifteen cents and dance a little. Suddenly, as if a wave had broken against him, scattering itself in iridescent

bits of light, Paul realized these people were himself—they were a part of him—they were his people. A phrase sounded in his mind—he could not remember where he had read it—"returns at last to me"—he only knew perfectly and clearly what it meant. He only knew that he must somehow share himself—his experience—everything he was *with them*. Yes, he towered above them. His body was strong—his reach excelled theirs—he saw more clearly. What could he do with these things *now*? What of himself could he give? For a long moment he pondered and then he smiled, and edging along, close to the wall, he made his way to the piano.

The piano player bit into his dead cigarette and braced his shoulders. That dull pain in his chest had returned. Be bad if it was going to start every time he had a jam session. Better switch to something slow and easy. He swung into the opening bars of the "St. James Infirmary." He closed his eyes. Nice music—soothing. He stopped thumping his foot—his fingers clung to the keys—he played more softly. Why, that little old song was positively beautiful! He relaxed, resting on the music—floating on the music. As from a long way off, he gradually became conscious that he was not alone—he wasn't making that music all by himself. He opened his eyes and looked up. Then he blinked. On the piano leaned a big man, a huge man, with smiling eyes. And he was singing softly. The piano player stared, fascinated. Then, he nodded and said, hoarsely, "Let's have it, big boy!"

The man threw back his head. "I went down to St. James Infirmary—" His voice wrapped itself about the words as line by line he recounted the story of the woman "whose man had done her wrong." Just a "barrel-house, blues song," but Saunders and Hailstolk and Bradge stared in amazement. Paul's face, seen in that circle of light through the haze of smoke, was so warm and alive that its glow was infectious. Dull eyes began to glow, shifting eyes became focused, lips began to smile.

There were excited whispers, craning necks, thorough enjoyment of round, rich tones.

When the song ended, they clapped their hands, stamped their feet and demanded, "More! More!" He laughed with them—asked apologetically, "Could I put up the window? The smoke—"

A dozen hands did it for him.

"Sure—let some air in here!"

"He can't sing in the smoke!"

"Don't shove, bo—gotta get this window up!"

"Hey, sing the 'St. Louis Blues'!"

"Yeh—man, let's have the 'St. Louis Blues'!"

So he sang Handy's "St. Louis Blues" while the good, fresh air replaced the fumes and heavy odors. Then, before they could exclaim, the pianist sounded a rippling chord and without looking up and in a way that brought your heart up in your throat he was playing "Oh, my darling Nellie Gray, they have taken you away, and I'll never, never see you any more." It was a cry—a cry of pain pouring through his fingers, and Paul, like a hand reaching out through the darkness, joined the magic of his voice in that cry. There was not a sound in the room as he sang; there was not a sound in the hall outside. For a few short moments, they shared and shared alike.

The moment of silence was broken by a hesitating voice—"Mis-tah—ain't you—Paul Robeson?"

There were gasps in the crowd. But Paul, laughing, asked, "Gosh—how'd you know?" Then, quickly, "Come on—let's have something lively!"

Instantly, the pianist began "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby!" Paul's eyes danced as he sang through the first lively chorus; then, grabbing the nearest girl, he began to dance the Charleston. They snapped on more light, made a circle around him, clapped their hands and called out approbation as he and his

partner kicked and twirled. The piano player laughed aloud and added every conceivable flourish. Finally everybody stopped—exhausted, laughing, leaning against each other—while the wonder of the evening spread from lip to lip—out into the halls—up and down the stairs—people peered over banisters. It was Paul Robeson! The great Paul Robeson! He was there with them and, boy—was he having a good time! Their pride in this fact was to stay with them and warm them and lift them through many a hard day.

There were other songs. The pianist knew everything. They kept begging for more. Somebody brought him a glass of cloudy liquid. He took one sip and choked. Then, with their eyes upon him—drank it down. It burned its way into his stomach. He became very tired. One more. He turned to the pianist, who was watching him with shining eyes, and murmured something. The music rippled softly and the crowd became very still again. And Paul sang "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise." He made it mean for them that all the world was waiting for a better day—that hope was not a broken thing—for that sunrise was not so far away.

They followed him down to the street and after he and the others had gone they dispersed quickly. They wanted to carry this golden thing away with them—to tell others. They, too, wanted to share it.

Paul stumbled over a snow mound and staggered slightly. He was exhausted and his stomach was making queer turns. Saunders looked at him curiously. He couldn't quite make Paul Robeson out. Certainly, he was an amazing fellow. Jimmy McClendon was also looking at Paul. Perhaps, of the group, he alone really knew what had happened that evening. Now, he fastened his arm through Paul's and suggested, "How about stopping at Devann's for a cup of coffee?"

Everybody agreed it was a good idea. Devann's was a more

elegant place than Pop's. A man could and often did take his best girl to Devann's. It was one of the nicer eating places in Harlem.

Their favorite table in the back was taken, but they found one near the door. The fifth man's chair would be in the aisle—but that was nothing. Paul took the fifth seat. His head was feeling light and he found himself laughing uproariously at something Bradge said. Jimmy answered with a wisecrack. There was more laughter.

At a small back table two girls were just finishing their meal. They had commented upon the rather noisy entrance of Paul's group. They recognized two of the young men. They were not, however, particularly interested. The girl facing front wore a fetching little hat over a wealth of thick, black hair. Her skin was faultlessly clear. Health, vigor and intelligence shown from her eyes. The darker girl leaned forward.

"Ready, Essie?"

"Yes." She was slipping on her gloves. "We'd better go. I've an important case study coming up in the morning."

Leaving a tip, they rose and began to make their way between the tables. About midway to the door they were hailed by friends at one of the center tables and stopped to talk. Just then there came another burst of boisterous, loud laughter from the young men at the front table.

"The playboys are having a good time," somebody remarked.

"And not a woman among them. Such a waste!" The cute little schoolteacher was frankly annoyed.

The girl addressed as Essie laughed. "You girls! Always hate to see a man by himself!"

The schoolteacher made a little face.

"That's all right for you to be so indifferent, Essie Goode; you're lousy with brains! But we weaker sisters want a husband."

The girls were again looking toward the front table. One of them now leaned forward excitedly. "And do you know who that is?" She nodded her head. "That's Paul Robeson!" The girl with the cool, clear skin turned and looked. Paul at that moment threw back his head for another laugh. She said nothing until the sound had died away and then—

"So *that's* the great Paul Robeson! Well—he certainly does enjoy life!"

The tone was not altogether approving and he heard the words distinctly. They came through one of those unusual pauses which sometimes occur. Her voice had carried through the stillness. She did not realize this and, having now bid her friends good night, came toward the door. Paul saw that he was directly in her path. She had to pass around him. He turned his head and looked at her. A faint flush tinted the peach of her skin, but her eyes passed over him without a flicker!

He was annoyed. Several weeks were to pass before he saw her again.

For Alpha Phi Alpha men December was crowded with events. The holidays brought members from all over the country to attend their national convention. Paul shook the hands of men who all his life had been only names—Negroes of whom his father and brothers had spoken proudly. Then came the last night of the year, when they came together for their closing banquet and to hear their most distinguished member, the internationally known savant, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois.

Paul leaned forward studying this man of whom he had heard so much, whose books he had read. He observed the proud, handsome face which looked as if it had been chiseled in bronze, the piercing eyes, the haughty carriage of head. Here was a man who walked with dignity—who spoke with authority, precisely, without emotion.

"The truth shall make you free. There is no other way. Ours

is the task of bringing about united action on the part of thinking Americans, white and black, to force the truth concerning Negroes to the attention of the nation."

Each man listened attentively. Paul looked again down the long board.

"Scientific investigation and organized action among Negroes, in close co-operation, to secure the survival of the Negro race, until the cultural development of America and the world is willing to recognize Negro freedom as an essential part of human progress."

He had concluded his speech. No flights of oratory, no impassioned peroration—only the truth.

Paul was never to forget that evening. When but ten minutes of the old year were left everybody stood in a circle around the room, with arms crossed and each man's hand grasping the hand of the man beside him. Standing thus they sang "Alpha Phi Alpha"—

In our Alpha Phi Alpha
Fraternal spirit binds all the
Noble, true and courageous.
Manly deeds and scholarship,
Service to all mankind
Are the aims of our dear Fraternity . . .

As the chorus and second verse followed the hall lights were slowly extinguished until only the blazing figure "1920" in the rear was left. Then as the singing continued softly this figure too faded and in its place there appeared "Welcome, 1921." The song was concluded. For a moment silence prevailed. Then from the outside whistles sounded from far and near, pistols were shot into the air. The lights came up full. They drank a toast to the New Year.

Paul was certain 1921 would be a good year for him.

But he certainly didn't count it good luck when, two weeks later, he slipped on the gym floor and, in spite of his protests, was taken to the Presbyterian Hospital. It had been such a silly thing to do. He—Paul Robeson—playing basketball with a bunch of kids at St. Phillips, falls in the gym! He groaned aloud as the doctor stretched his arm and snapped the sprained shoulder into place. For a moment the pain was excruciating. Then he lay back weakly. Lord, what an idiot!

"All set, Mr. Robeson." The doctor was most cheerful. "Lucky there's no break. I think, however, we'd better put your arm in a sling for a few days.

Paul only smiled. He was out of breath. The nurse, all a-flutter, began unwinding bandages. Into the room came another trim, white-clad figure.

"New patient?"

Paul stiffened. She had asked as if new patients were cause for rejoicing. Paul had recognized her instantly—in spite of the uniform. It was the girl with the peaches-and-cream skin—the girl who thought he was a playboy! He half closed his eyes as if in pain.

The doctor had glanced up, his face registering keen interest. Paul noticed this, also.

"No, Miss Goode." Paul wondered why he needed to grin so fatuously. "Only a sprained shoulder. Paul Robeson doesn't break easily."

"Oh—he doesn't?" Again the mocking tone behind those dancing eyes. But this time she looked at him!

Just how Paul got up he doesn't know. One moment he was lying back on the cot—the next he was standing on his feet looking down at *her*. She was such a tiny little thing to be so straight and hold her head so high! Such a neat, crisp little thing—with such clear, knowing eyes. How dare she look at him like that? Didn't she know he was Paul Robeson—*the* Paul Robeson? Suddenly, that seemed the most important thing in

all the world—suddenly, he was glad to be himself—strong and big—with smooth, rippling muscles and long arms. Why, he could pick her up! With one hand, he could—

And then, with his one good arm, he did just that—swept her off her feet!

Time stood still—while the snows melted and all the trees in Central Park turned green. Summer—a glorious summer came to New York. In August they slipped away and were quietly married.

10

THE "A" THEME RECURS MARKED "ADAGIO"

THE CLINIC LABORATORY of the Columbia Medical Center was a thing of snowy whiteness, glittering polish and antisepticized cleanliness. The tall, narrow germ-proof cases with metal apparatus and multicolored bottles, the raised stands with their orderly rows of tubes, some half filled with liquids, corked and carefully labeled, others sterilized and ready for use, even the linoleum-covered floor had been scrubbed until it had been cleansed of every tiny blemish. The laboratory was spotless. So was the trim, white figure standing motionless before a tray near the window. Her back was to the room, but from the smooth, shining roll of hair caught firmly at her neck to the tips of the perfectly level heels of her white shoes, the figure bespoke efficient readiness. Then in the silence of the room sounded a deep sigh and the figure drooped.

It was a lovely, bright fall morning. The experiment had turned out satisfactorily, but the pathologist merely stared at the tube in her hand unseeingly. She was thinking about her husband, Paul Robeson. After a moment she shook her head and frowned sternly. This would never do. She would have to concentrate. For a few minutes she worked briskly. Then, fitting the tubes in place, she removed every stain, glanced at the tiny watch on her wrist and decided she would go out for a cup of coffee. She threw on a cape and slipped out of a side door. Generally she enjoyed company, but now she must think this thing

through. She was worried—worried about Paul. Her wonderful, big, soft-voiced, gentle, kind and thoughtful Paul was not happy.

Two years had passed quickly. At first they had hugged their marriage within their own hearts, a shining secret, sharing it with no one. The new husband, keenly concerned with his responsibility, played professional football with the Akron Indians. Money had suddenly become important. Also he now felt the urge to finish that law course as quickly as possible. She had just been appointed pathologist at the Presbyterian Hospital of the Columbia Medical Center and she planned to work until Paul was "all set." When their secret did slip out they were showered with congratulations. Everybody considered each a wonderful "catch" for the other.

For Eslanda Cardozo Goode was a personage in her own right. Her mother was a Cardozo, proud family of Spanish-Jewish origin. Cardozos with some Negro blood had never felt the scourge and pain of slavery. One of them, Francis Cardozo, after being educated at the University of Glasgow, had been a leader among the Abolitionists of Connecticut. Returning south, he had been a spokesman in the first Constitutional Convention that met at Charleston, South Carolina, and had later rejected the dubious honor of being Lieutenant-Governor of that state. Eslanda's father had come out of the west, but had died while she was still very young. It therefore happened that she had grown up with her mother's family in Washington.

She would not allow her more affluent relatives to patronize her. It was her own decision that carried her back to her father's state to attend college. After graduating from the University of Illinois, where she majored in chemistry, she took a graduate degree at Columbia, studied medical chemistry for two years and then received this unusual appointment at the Presbyterian Hospital—an appointment rare enough at that time for a Negro, and unheard-of for a Negro woman.

Also she had married Paul! Could anything be more wonderful? Two healthy, ambitious young people with the world before them. And the world was really discovering Paul. Week ends he played professional football with the Milwaukee Badgers of the National Football League. His name drew crowds. Jimmy Conzelman, one of the most popular and colorful figures in American sports, says of that period: "Each Sunday afternoon he'd throw that six-foot-four-inch frame at reckless tacklers and he was hard to stop. His weight, two hundred and fifteen, was distributed with an eye to architectural beauty—every pound right where it should be. He could pull down forward passes and block—for keeps." A glittering offer from boxing promoters was dangled before their eyes. "Come on, Robeson," they said, "come into the ring. We'll match you with Jack Dempsey. One fight and—win or lose—you'll make a fortune!" Paul said he would think it over. Those were exciting days while the news got around that Paul Robeson was going to be a prize fighter—that the great football player would try for Dempsey's title! There were those who said cynically, "So that's what he's going to do with his Phi Beta Kappa key!" There were others who commented briefly, "He'll make a million!"

After consideration Paul refused. His father would have thought little of such a venture. His wife heartily concurred with his decision. There were better things in store for Paul. Her faith had been justified. Shortly before Paul finished his law course the young couple had a visitor—Coach George Foster Sanford. They greeted him warmly—Essie's heart already overflowing with all the things Paul had said about this teacher and friend. And he was utterly captivated by the sparkling black eyes of Paul's bride. He savored their happiness as he pulled on his pipe and studied them through clouds of smoke. It was while Paul was out of the room that he asked some direct questions regarding their future plans.

"Paul would like to get real law experience when he graduates," Essie said. Then her eyes clouded. "But it's very difficult."

"Aren't there Negro businesses and Negro insurance companies? Surely they need competent lawyers." Sanford had learned much about Negroes in the last few years.

"There are rapidly expanding Negro insurance companies and many Negroes do have to consult lawyers, but—in all their dealings Negroes are in competition or are involved with established and experienced groups. They are forced to engage lawyers whose experience equals that of their competitors. And they know that their own lawyers have not had opportunities to acquire specialized experience. It's a pretty vicious circle."

Paul returned at that moment bearing three chilled glasses and they changed the subject. But as Sanford watched Paul throw his long frame into the big easy chair and smile affectionately at the pretty girl beside him, a little glow of warm anticipation glowed in the Coach's eyes.

At one time Coach Sanford had retired from coaching. He squirmed in embarrassment at the very remembrance. He had been so successful and so utterly bored. Having entered the insurance brokerage business in New York City he had finally found himself president of the firm of Smyth, Sanford and Gerard, Inc. The "grand canyons" of big business had stifled him; the high walls had shut him in. He couldn't see the sky. It had taken very little persuasion to get him to leave New York for Rutgers University's campus. But now, as he considered Paul, he was glad he had maintained connections in Wall Street. He grinned complacently and lifting his glass made a toast, "Here's to the future—and all that it may bring you!"

A few months later the small, compact world of "inside Negro life" vibrated with animation. Their Paul Robeson had miraculously been taken into a prominent law firm downtown —a capable, trained Negro was having the opportunity to

acquire experience in big legal work—would get on the inside of big business—might handle big cases! The news was like a shot in the arm!

It had all seemed so perfect—only it wasn't. It wasn't perfect at all. Paul was not happy.

He did not complain. Most of his evenings were spent poring over the files and huge books in the office. He seized every opening to observe, to learn, to listen, to compare. He was determined to master all the intricate techniques presented by the law of the land. A few days before, he had turned in the completed brief of an already famous case being handled by the firm. The head of the firm was so well pleased that he called Paul in and told him his brief would be used when the case was brought to trial. Of course, Paul himself would not appear in court. Already, the presence of so conspicuous a Negro in the office was attracting too much attention. Paul's huge frame simply couldn't be hidden behind innumerable doors; once his deep voice was heard it was remembered; he was looked up and hailed by Rutgers men, by Columbia men; thousands of people had seen him play football. No, it wasn't easy to hide Paul. And the clerks and junior members of the firm were embarrassed. Some of them resented him.

Through every tendril of his sensitive nature Paul sensed this Thing which chilled and threw him back into himself. Would it never end—the pointless, uneven struggle? He had met this Thing and conquered it again and again; he had proven himself over and over; he had excelled. What more did they want? What more was demanded of him? What did they want him to do?

It was the night before that Essie became alarmed. He had been silent, almost glum. Avoiding all reference to the office, she had forced herself to chatter gaily about the play—the play they were giving at the Y.W.C.A. She had told an amusing incident involving Charles Gilpin, who had been persuaded to

direct this amateur undertaking. Paul had given little notice of having heard her until he said softly, "Charles Gilpin—they say he drinks—in order to—keep coming back."

"What—what did you say, dear?" Essie tried to keep her voice light.

But he hadn't answered. Just turned and walked out of the room. Essie had heard him. She had understood every word and she had felt the suppressed bitterness in the tone. She knew exactly what he was talking about.

After long years of groping on badly lighted stages amidst shabby scenery, Charles Gilpin had been declared an actor of genius. Because he never stopped trying, he had managed to secure the bit part of an old Negro slave in Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*. The bit had only been stuck in for sentimental color, but Charles Gilpin had filled the two minutes with unforgettable beauty. And so when Eugene O'Neill wrote his tremendous fantasy of a Caribbean Island king who reverts to his native state, Jasper Deeter recalled his fleeting memory of that moment in *Abraham Lincoln* and the Provincetown Players looked up Charles Gilpin. With almost no coaching this Negro actor had leaped to stardom in *The Emperor Jones*. For a few days he was the chief topic of discussion along Broadway. They wrote panegyrics on him—"The moment when he raises his naked body against the moonlit sky beyond the edge of the jungle and prays, is such a dark lyric of the flesh, such a cry of the primitive being, as I have never seen in the theater." * Essie had seen this production—and from that moment she had been caught up in the magic of the stage. Yes, surely, Charles Gilpin had had his hour—after so many years of struggle. And it was worth it. It was worth the struggle, Essie was sure of it. Only now again he was merely hanging around the poolrooms of Seventh Avenue. And they said he drank—heavily.

Why had Paul made that comment? Why was each word

* Kenneth MacGowan: *The Globe*, November 4, 1920.

so weighted with bitterness? Was Paul seeing himself in Charles Gilpin—was he beginning to feel beaten? No—no—she pushed the thought away. She had purposely brought them together, had cajoled and pleaded and teased Paul to take a part when she had learned that Charles Gilpin was going to direct the one-act plays for the Y.W.C.A. group. She wanted Gilpin to interest Paul in the stage. Dramatics might offer him some outlet for all his rich and pent-up emotions. Now—

She pushed back her chair impatiently. She must get back to the lab, but first she must phone Paul. She had to talk to him—to hear his voice. Her own voice was strained when she placed the call, and while she waited she was tense. But when she heard the rich, vibrant warmth of him coming to her over the wires, her very bones melted. For a moment she could not speak at all. Relief filled her whole being to overflowing.

"Paul Robeson speaking."

She gasped. "Paul—Paul, dear, I—"

"Essie—what—"

"It's nothing, Paul. I—I just ran up the steps. I wanted to remind you about the play rehearsal tonight. You will be home—early?"

"Oh—yes—yes, I remember." His voice thinned out. But then he chuckled. That play! The joke was on him. Oh, well—he'd promised. "Sure, honey, I'll be there."

She hung up then and drew a deep breath. It was all right. Paul would keep his word.

He was on hand that evening at the rehearsal, accepted his part with a wry face and left early. His strictly private comment as he grinned at Essie was, "Now she'll stop pestering me!"

The Lafayette Theater with its really excellent stock company had made Harlem theater-conscious. Its people were quite familiar with the popular melodramas of the day: *Madame X, On Trial, The Servant in the House,* and *Within*

the Law were favorites. With few exceptions all the Negro actors first appearing on Broadway or in Hollywood came from this stock company—Charles Gilpin, Frank Wilson, Clarence Muse, Jack Carter, Evelyn Ellis, Edna Thomas and Rose McClendon. Musical offerings from Harlem were again "catching on" downtown. Sissle and Blake finally opened *Shuffle Along* at the Sixty-Third Street Theater and had immediate success. This had been followed by *Runnin' Wild,* introducing Florence Mills. Then New Yorkers began filling theaters to see *The Chocolate Dandies* and a girl in the chorus named Josephine Baker. With the presentation of three one-act plays by Ridgely Torrence "written for the Negro theater," at the Garden Theater in Madison Square Garden, Harlem was set far up front in the Little Theater Movement. Settings and costumes for this production were designed by Robert Edmond Jones. Here for the first time anywhere in the United States Negro actors commanded the serious attention of critics, the general press and the public. Playwrights, directors and producers were beginning to consider that maybe they had overlooked something good. They quietly sent out scouts to 135th Street and Seventh Avenue.

Now, though her husband remained untouched by these quivering waves which undulated all around them, Mrs. Paul Robeson was keenly aware of them. She sensed that there was more to this than superficial interest. The current of old streams had changed, and waves, little and rippling now, might yet go far.

Since coming to New York, Paul had learned thoroughly to enjoy the theater. After a time he met many theater people and loved their parties. Through his wife this circle had grown and he felt more at home with them. During the illness of one of "The Four Harmony Kings," appearing in *Shuffle Along,* Paul had obligingly taken his place. "Harmonizing" with three other fellows had always been one of Paul's chief diversions, so it

had been great fun. Much to his own surprise he had not been nervous at all. He had been quite set up by having been invited to add his untrained baritone to such an illustrious trio and he was only concerned with the most effective blending of his tones with theirs. It did not occur to him that any part of the applause was for him. He was drawing back and allowing the three "Kings" to do the bowing when Brownell muttered out of the side of his mouth, "Smile, Robeson, smile!" Then—he smiled.

Essie, sitting in the back of the theater, had noted the effect of that smile!

Then Paul found himself vainly flapping his wings against glass partitions, and his wife, her heart in her mouth, began reaching for the stars.

Weeks passed before the Y.W.C.A. plays were ready. Paul managed to attend only a few rehearsals. He had only a few lines and he soon knew them. The play was Ridgely Torrence's *Simon the Cyrenian*. Paul, of course, was to be Simon, the native of North Africa who carried Christ's cross on the day of the crucifixion. Paul had no trouble remembering his lines. Then *The Emperor Jones* went on the road and Charles Gilpin, its star, had to leave New York. But rehearsals continued under the direction of Mrs. Dora Cole.

As would happen, Paul was delayed at the office on the evening of the production. He phoned home, saying he would go directly to the "Y." When he closed his desk his head was aching and he was jumpy with nerves, but he was grimly triumphant. He'd show them! He'd get this Thing yet. He'd show them they couldn't keep Paul Robeson down!

The trip uptown in the crowded subway was maddening. He tried to think about the play, but now the lines seemed hopelessly jumbled, and when he felt in his overcoat pocket for the script he had been carrying around he found that one page

was missing. Bother! Why had he ever let himself in for such a thing? He was certainly going to make a spectacle of himself. Oh, well, he didn't have time to be fooling with amateur dramatics. He was a lawyer!

It was after nine o'clock by the time he reached the Harlem Branch of the Y.W.C.A. People were standing about the desk in the reception room and he had to push his way through. His name was called several times. He tried to respond, but he did wish everybody wouldn't turn and stare. Essie was waiting for him in the back hall. *Simon the Cyrenian* was the last of the three plays so there was plenty of time to slip into his robe.

The Y "theater" was just a small hall with a raised platform. Every bit of space had been filled with chairs which overflowed into the corridor. The dramatic group had seen to it that the news got about. Both Charles Gilpin's and Paul Robeson's names appeared on the tickets. They had sold like hot cakes. Chairs were crowded right up to the small stage. The hall was darkened. As a rule the stage was lighted by a single unshaded bulb hanging from the ceiling, but tonight special effects had been secured with oil lamps, skillfully placed by the director, Charles Gilpin.

Paul had looked over his lines again, using Essie's neatly typed sheets. He waited now, depending on Essie to tell him when to go in. Finally, came her whisper, "All right, Paul."

And Paul Robeson stepped into a shadowed garden. He was facing a slender, dark figure who looked at him reproachfully and said, "You have been long away."

The words struck him like a blow! All at once they were no longer merely a line cue. *You have been long away!* They seemed to echo and resound in the air about him—they beat upon his heart like hammers. His father was saying them. He must answer—he must explain. From somewhere far down inside of him he pleaded, "Not so long as to—have forgotten."

But the youthful, dark figure was not satisfied.

"Have you forgotten Cyrene and Egypt and our kingdom of the free?"

Paul took a step forward. He wanted to shout, "No! No! I have not forgotten." But other voices were carrying lines now and he looked out at the tightly packed sea of faces. Now, once more by that strange sixth sense of his, their vision entered his being and he saw himself as they were seeing him. Not just another amateur actor, stuttering some lines he'd learned from a book—he was their Spokesman, their Sacrifice and Longing of the years; he was their Champion and their Hope—through him they would be heard—would have new life—would walk down shining roads with heads erect!

> Oh, Simon, wake.
> Shake off this net of dreams. How were you
> Taken in it?

Slowly he drew his hand across his brow. Then answered clearly—

> I am not taken.

It was true. The veil had fallen from his eyes. Every portion of his body was alive. He and Simon the Cyrenian had become one. What was it they were saying . . . the wife of Pilate pleading with him to withhold—not to follow the condemned Jesus of Nazareth. It was too late. He knew now what he must do.

> Oh, my Cyrenian, where is that fierce blood
> That poured out from your heart fires to burn
> Rome?

He answered proudly—

> My spirit is fiercer than it was before,
> The groans of the oppressed louder than ever.

And to the question—

> Then why have you turned back?

He said—

> I have seen the whole world's sorrow in one man's eyes.

Simon the Cyrenian and he were one. The play moved on to its inevitable end. Simon is warned—

> Remember Cyrene, Egypt and our world,
> Bantus and Africa.

And Paul Robeson gave his final word—

> Their roots are in my heart.

Tears ran unheeded down the cheeks of grizzled old men. They'd come to see a play—and witnessed a miracle! The road had been so long, Oh Lord, so long. But now a better day was coming. That young man would carry the load—and he was strong. Thank the good Lord—he was strong.

When the curtain fell Paul did sink down for a moment—easing the huge wooden cross from his back. He sank down just a moment—to rest.

And in the back of the hall, Kenneth MacGowan and Jimmy Light of the Provincetown Playhouse were talking excitedly.

"What a performance! What a superb performance!"

"A born actor!"

"What a man!"

The Third Movement

SCHERZO

11

MACDOUGAL STREET

GHOSTS WALK ON THE STREET! Not shapeless gray wraiths of melancholy gloom bent on destruction, but airy filaments of days which have gone by. The charm of old New York clings to Greenwich Village. It's in the air—in the tones of strange and unfamiliar tongues, in the colors of a Turkish shawl, in the odor of a steaming bowl of Russian borstch. For Greenwich Village recalls a hamlet that once huddled about a bay, a street beginning at the water's edge, the smell of the sea across which came ships bearing eager, bright-eyed passengers, neighbors who, after an early supper, strolled past the Bear Market on Broadway to the playhouse just around the corner on John Street, where had been erected New York's first permanent theater.

Two hundred years—more or less—mean nothing to ghosts. So it was that on this April morning as Paul Robeson turned off Macdougal Street and struck out across Washington Square the ghosts adjusted their three-cornered hats, passed around a snuff box (it had come from India) and slapped their sides with glee. And the lady ghosts, daintily holding their full skirts lest they touch the sidewalk, skimmed along and nodded their heads approvingly. They knew an actor when they saw one! Had they not seen numerous performances of the Hallams (father and son), of John Kemble, Wignell, Chalmers and the great Mr. Cooper? Had they not attended the opening of *The Conquest* with Royal Tyler, Esq., himself? Indeed, yes.

They were constantly on the lookout for good actors. And now, this tall dark man with his magnificent stride and rich, resonant voice had joined the Provincetown Players! By gad, 'twas a memorable morning—an item for one's diary. It was, indeed!

Spring in Washington Square! A time and place to pause awhile on a bench facing uptown, in front of which a child went about the business of feeding a flock of pigeons, above which the feathery greenness of tiny new leaves turned greedily to the sun. Paul leaned back and lifted his eyes to the great arch that framed Fifth Avenue. So much of rushing, headlong life—big buses rumbling under the arch, students spilling out of New York University just beyond the Square—and yet so much of peace, a sense of timelessness. Could this be New York City? The ghosts nudged each other knowingly.

From the very first Manhattan Island had conformed to no set pattern. Pious neighbors on the north and haughty aristocrats on the south had called the little port *"l'enfant terrible."* But even then its peoples were far too occupied to care.

One reads in history books of early trading, of steady growth, of how a Dutch possession became English. Facts—mere bagatelles! The important thing to know is that no Treasure Island was more splendid, that to this port came swarthy long-haired sea captains with swaggering blades and bags of gold. The streets in front of the fort at the lower end of Broadway were thronged with gay pageantry; with motley and weird groups. There were blacks from Madagascar, some of them masters of their own ships, and Finns from the Baltic. Beauties with olive skin wearing Oriental shawls of flaming scarlet were in striking contrast to the stolid Dutch housekeepers and golden-haired English women who gradually became more numerous. There was much trafficking and traveling between this port and the West Indies. Old Henry Morgan, glamorous buccaneer, whose wealth was gathered from the seven seas, and whose grandson, many times removed, still

names his yacht the *Corsair,* became Governor of Jamaica. Less fortunate Millard Fillmore, great-grandfather of the thirteenth President of the United States, was tried for piracy in 1724.

As the years passed, all along the waterfront from South Ferry to the dry dock at the foot of Twelfth Street were to be seen deep-seagoing ships of every description. Water Street was a street of all nations and each business house floated a flag designed to attract the class of trade it sought to secure. At night the thoroughfare glowed with blazing torches, whale-oil flares and charcoal fires, while crowds gathered at the Battery to hear the chanty singing of the sailors.

Then in 1735 came the Hallams, heading a band of English actors, who cleaned up an old building on Nassau Street, just off Broadway, and offered a season of plays. They were well received. Upon their return to the West Indies they promised to come back to New York. When this was accomplished they played for a short time on Cruger's Wharf. Trouble developed with the authorities, who looked with some displeasure upon "strolling players." But the people's will prevailed and in the summer of 1767 a permanent theater was erected on John Street. John Street began, as now, on Broadway and the theater was conveniently located. Here New Yorkers and daring visitors saw Shakespeare, the works of Sheridan, revivals of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Nash, Peele, Kyd, Greene and Christopher Marlowe. When the British captured New York during the Revolutionary War, British officers sometimes took parts in the plays at the John Street Theater (during that period called "The Royale"). But the favorite story told of the theater on John Street is that when the newly elected President of the United States first attended, his appearance was commemorated by a special march composed by the leader of the orchestra, a Mr. Fyles. It was "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." The entire audience arose as George Washington and

the First Lady entered, and remained standing till the music ceased and he was seated.

John Street Theater survived war and the scourges of yellow fever, but in 1835 came the fire which virtually wiped out all New York! In three days it was gone—all the wharves, warehouses, the Merchants Exchange, taverns, markets, comfortable dwellings and hovels. Everything was gone, except, perhaps, a *street.*

The Dutch streets below Wall are still tortuous paths surveyed and laid out originally by following cow paths. Even after the fire they were rebuilt in the same fashion. But Broadway from the first was destined for greatness. It was there before the white man came. The Indian hunted along this backbone of the island. From its commanding heights, he could look to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west. Over hill and dale, across streams, and by the side of waters, it crept the length of the island, and finally to the mainland. *"Der Heere Straat,"* the High Wagon Road, the Dutch called it. And after the fire this wagon road led through wide open pastures, excellent for cattle, to a pleasant little place called Greenwich Village. It was then the ghosts began to walk up Broadway.

For New York was rebuilt. They cleared away the charred and blackened debris and in the place of a little hamlet on the rim of an unknown continent there rose a city of concrete, stone and steel. Lower Manhattan became a city of high finance—a city of high walls.

No longer was there room for markets, heaped with fresh, green vegetables, or wooden Indians guarding cigar stores, or children feeding pigeons in the streets, or artists sketching sails along the wharf, or women airing babies in the sun, or strangers from far distant lands—singing together. There was no room for such things—and so they went up Broadway.

And when the Provincetown Players opened their theater at 133 Macdougal Street, the ghosts of old New York were very glad. These Players were their kind—rebels and unafraid. They, too, loved the sea—had given productions on an open wharf in the fog, and had converted a stable into a playhouse. Now, from among the variable monads of all time, there came Paul Robeson! He had found the road—the High Wagon Road—passing through Greenwich Village and on around the world. Indeed, that morning in the spring of 1924 was well worth noting.

Paul sat on the bench in Washington Square vaguely conscious of the swirling dim shapes all around him. He had just left Eugene O'Neill and so much that had been shapeless in his mind now took on form. This creative artist who had been born on Broadway, whose face was bronzed by the salt of many seas, who had tended mules on cattle ships from Buenos Aires to South Africa and mined gold in the Spanish Honduras, who had conquered disease and poverty and pain—was like a torch, consuming himself to give off light. The deep-set eyes of O'Neill beneath their shaggy brows had bored into his soul. Then, lifting themselves, had drawn him like a magnet, forcing his own eyes to pierce the distant horizons.

"Interpretation"—the hard, glittering quality of O'Neill sounded in his voice—"fitting together the bits until we have the perfect whole. The Greeks showed us how it can be done. Now we must do it—out of our own times—using our own materials." O'Neill's dark, handsome face glowed with intensity.

"If—if—I could—" Paul had spoken timidly, feeling his way, "could interpret the—Negro. Make audiences understand—"

An impatient gesture brushed aside his words.

"You limit yourself! When you have learned to speak clearly, distinctly and unhesitatingly with every portion of your

strong body—when you have filled yourself with life and living —you'll find you have a universal language all men will understand."

This then was what the theater offered him—to speak to all men. But could he learn this language? Was he equal to the job? And what exactly did he want to say?

In the weeks which followed there was little time for philosophic speculation. The Provincetown Playhouse had reached maturity after its years of breathless, youthful and sometimes heartbreaking experiments. Under the management of Kenneth MacGowan, Robert Edmond Jones and Eugene O'Neill, it was a theater of accomplishment and stability. A press agent had been added to the staff; premières had the glitter of uptown openings; limousines and tophats were no longer regarded with amazement by the inhabitants of Macdougal Street.

The Provincetown Playhouse had not, however, renounced its independence. The starring of an unknown Negro actor, Charles Gilpin, in *The Emperor Jones,* had turned out to be an artistic and financial success, but when the production *All God's Chillun Got Wings* was announced there came a storm of protest. The fact that the play dealt with a marriage between a Negro and a white girl was seized upon by the press and bruited throughout the country. This before there was any understanding of the real tragedy inherent in the play or of its universal symbolism. The Provincetown Players stuck by their guns and O'Neill issued a strong statement to the press which we quote in part:

"Prejudice born of an entire ignorance of the subject is the last word in injustice and absurdity. The Provincetown Playhouse has ignored all criticism not founded on a knowledge of the play and will continue to ignore it. . . . All we ask is a square deal. A play is written to be expressed through the theater, and only on its merits in a theater can a final judgment be passed on it with justice. We demand this hearing."

Robeson had been cast in the role of Jim Harris, the young law student whose soul is destroyed. As rehearsals proceeded calm assurance grew among the Players themselves. Jimmy Light in his direction did not rush their neophyte. "Let yourself go, Paul. Don't be afraid to move—be natural." But big Paul, shut in on the tiny stage, was afraid. He felt cramped, awkward, clumsy. There were times when he despaired. His body was a hunk of clay.

Others observing him did not share his discouragement. They knew the spark was there; they saw it fitfully trying to break through; they saw Paul lose weight; saw the shadows deepen in his face and saw the flame grow stronger.

Then it was decided to introduce Paul Robeson, actor, to the public in the role of "Emperor Jones." This was a canny move to focus the attention of the public on an actor instead of on a race issue. So unexpectedly Paul was faced with the task of learning the long and arduous role—demanding that he be upon the stage alone for five consecutive scenes! Dramatic literature offers no more trying test to any actor. And he was to come after one who had been acclaimed "the first American Negro in the United States to be awarded for a dramatic performance"—he, Paul Robeson, who a few short months before had never walked across a stage! Now he was to appear in the role created by Charles Gilpin! How could he have dreamed such demands would be made upon him? No one could have blamed him for calling the whole thing off. But Paul Robeson had set his feet upon a road. There was no turning back.

On the evening of May 5, 1924, the Provincetown Theater was packed. Critics were skeptical. They shook their heads.

"It can't happen again!"

"After all, O'Neill's been lucky."

"Sure—I've seen Paul Robeson play football—but this!"

Then the theater darkened and offstage a drum began to sound. Like the beating of a heart it throbs throughout the

play. Perhaps that night there on Macdougal Street it drove one man like a relentless fate. Never letting up, never pausing, never changing tempo, it beat upon his heart until those two became as one. His pulse responded to the urge. The past, the jungles of fear and superstition, a human being driven to madness by his greed and fear—these were the forces that his body must make clear. His poor, tired, driven body must out of itself create this moment Truths which were eternal. At last, exhausted, worn, burned out, the creature falls prone upon the stage. At last the drum was still, and Paul Robeson, the man, lay as if dead. But from the deep recesses of his soul he cried, "Was it enough? Oh, God, did I make it clear?"

The answer came back unmistakably. The audience applauded wildly and critics rushed to write reviews—"This dusky giant unleashed in a great play," "Robeson adds to his extraordinary physique a shrewd, rich understanding," "A voice the like of which is rarely heard."

And so when on May 15, 1924, O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* opened, theater-goers were more anxious to see Paul Robeson than they were to take sides in an ugly dispute. Many people were thoroughly ashamed of the villifications which were being heaped upon Eugene O'Neill.

On the fly sheet of the Provincetown program appeared a statement in appreciation of the playwright. It was written by the Negro scholar Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and closed with the words:

"Happy is the artist that breaks through these shells, for his is the kingdom of eternal beauty. He will come through scarred and perhaps a little embittered—certainly astonished at the misinterpretation of his motives and his aims. He has my sympathy, for his soul must be lamed by the blows rained upon him. But it is work that must be done. No greater mine of dramatic material ever lay ready for the great artist's hands than the situation of men of Negro blood in modern America."

From the beginning of the play, Jim Harris, as represented by Paul Robeson, gripped the sympathy of the audience. The play distinctly is not propaganda. It is a tragedy of aspiration on Jim's part because of his hopeless striving. Ella, the girl, was but a concrete symbol of that aspiration.

George Jean Nathan's review in the *American Mercury,* July, 1924, was enthusiastic. Among other things he said: "Robeson, with relatively little experience and with no training to speak of, is one of the most thoroughly eloquent, impressive and convincing actors that I have looked at and listened to in almost twenty years of professional theater-going."

In the *New York World,* June 21, Lawrence Stallings asks:

"But must Robeson only appear as an actor when O'Neill writes a Negro play? One asks the question not caring a whoop in particular for the problem of race. Solely interested in Robeson's great qualities and in the stage, one wonders if he will play Othello some day with a Desdemona as capable, shy, as Miss Cowl might play it and thirded by an Iago as sinister as the memory of John Barrymore's Richard the Third can suggest? Shakespeare, any pundit will tell you, thought of Othello as a Negroid type. After seeing Robeson in *All God's Chillun,* one can imagine that Shakespeare must have thought of Robeson."

Miraculously summer came. Greenwich Village was now home for the Robesons. They loved every narrow, crooked street, the tiny exotic shops and unfamiliar eating places offering the foods of many nations. He had put all idea of law out of his mind. He knew certainly that a law career was not for him. She was cutting down hours at the hospital and was gradually giving all her time and attention to Paul's welfare. There was so much to learn. They loved the generous warm-hearted companionship of Macdougal Street—the freedom and informality. Working about the little auditorium or engaged in

animated discussions in the lounging room were the men and women whose thoughts and energies wrapped themselves about the mature and thoughtful theater which would be the outgrowth of America. Some of them, like Eugene O'Neill, already wielded influence along Broadway. New Yorkers were beginning to look toward Provincetown. Susan Glaspell, just returned from Greece, had achieved a sure place for herself, and now when Robert Edmond Jones gathered the players in the clubroom for readings from Stanislavski's *Life in Art,* he presented the theories in professional terms. But the group shared experiences, success and failures with each other. Mary Eleanor Fitzgerald, known as "Fitzi," bossed everybody, looked after everybody, checked every business detail and believed in the importance of everybody's contribution. And Christine in her restaurant on the second floor saw to it that they were well fed, and when they would come in tired and hungry after a particularly trying rehearsal she would sit on a table and regale them with imitations. In such an atmosphere no one could remain glum, for Christine, a large woman with red hair and green eyes, had a flair for mimicry and a keen eye.

Surely more than chance brought Paul Robeson to Macdougal Street at such a time. He'll tell you shyly, "It was my luck. I'm the luckiest man in the world!"

The circle widened. For walking along Macdougal Street came many artists and men whose names meant something in the great world outside. There was Heywood Broun, Glenway Westcott, Niles Spencer and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Arctic explorer. One day Antonio Salemme, the Italian sculptor, asked Paul if he might do a figure of him.

Six months before Paul would have thought such an idea ridiculous. Now, though he knew better, he hesitated.

"I—I couldn't pose for a sculptor. I don't know how."

Salemme brushed this aside.

"Posing is not what I want. Your body is something beauti-

ful to behold. It is expressive; it has intelligence. I'd like to work it into bronze."

So through the hot days of June and July Paul posed, nude, with his arms raised. Salemme's studio overlooked Washington Square. Through the open windows came the sound of children playing. Their voices were pleasant and the studio was cool and peaceful. While he worked, Salemme talked.

"All that we are exists in the body—mind, spirit and soul. The human form takes its beauty from all these. Its lines may suggest full, glowing life or dormant, empty life; the muscles may suggest fine, free, powerful movement, or calm stillness and peace. The body has harmony, rhythm and infinite meaning."

Paul listened—turning the words over in his mind. He began asking questions. Salemme's eyes sparkled. Ah! Here is one who understands!

"No more," he said gaily in the middle of one afternoon. "Come, we will look at pictures."

Hatless, they hurried down to the street, crossed the Square and caught a bus going up Fifth Avenue. They sat on top and stared at buildings and people like two small boys. Salemme pointed out certain architectural features along the way and laughed at certain manikins which smiled so invitingly behind gleaming plate glass. They descended in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and went inside.

Paul has never forgotten that first afternoon at the Metropolitan with Salemme. A whole new world opened up to him.

"Start looking at a picture here"—Salemme indicated the focal point—"then let your eye travel this way. See the—"

As his eyes took in unsuspected beauty, Paul's heart quickened and Salemme nodded with approval.

There were other visits to art galleries. Then one afternoon Paul carried Salemme off to his first baseball game. The little artist was entranced. Here, Paul was the teacher, and as

he unfolded all the fine points of the game Salemme grew more and more excited. Paul was hailed from many sections of the grandstand. This too delighted Salemme, who insisted upon eating an ice-cream cone and a hot dog, alternating bites!

So much of living was crowded into that summer. All that was happening to Paul Robeson became "copy" to the people of Harlem. They boasted of his success, derived from it hope and inspiration and sunned themselves in his reflected glory.

Walter White, social and cultural arbiter of Harlem, added Paul Robeson to his list of "special concerns." Even at that time Walter White was gearing his amazing capacity for crowding thirty-six hours of activities into the regular twenty-four hour day. With the help of his beautiful, golden wife he saw to it that the Robesons met the right people.

It was in the Walter Whites' home, one evening, that Paul met Carl Van Vechten.

12

"AN' THE WALLS CAME TUMBLIN' DOWN"

LIMOUSINES AND TAXIS turned into West 55th Street one night in October. The doorman spread a rug under the awning; noiselessly the elevator lifted itself skyward. Carl Van Vechten was giving a party!

Slender, white fingers rippling over ivory keys, a pale face, drawn and serious beneath the blue-black hair, with eyes half closed, a fragile body swaying like a reed—George Gershwin's music filled the drawing room on the top floor while tall bronze, tapering lights threw shadows all along the green walls and the high ceiling dissolved in coral pink. Light was reflected in carved and polished teakwood, glowed in the warm colors of tapestry, touched the grinning Buddha and was lost amid venerable intricacies of oriental rugs. This was the time and place for music. When Carl Van Vechten gave a party—George Gershwin gave his best.

Otto Kahn, relaxing against the high-backed chair, may have been wondering if a presentation of Gershwin at the Metropolitan Opera House might not rejuvenate that dusty old museum; Elinor Wylie, aloof and lovely, smiled wistfully, while close beside her Theodore Dreiser sat, heavy and brooding.

The music turned to throbbing blues and Alfred Knopf, publisher, turned to his friend, James Weldon Johnson, and whispered, "Pure Negro rhythm, isn't it?"

The poet Johnson, thinking of moss-covered cabins and meeting places beside streams, smiled and shook his head.

"The feeling's there, but—there is something added something missing—too."

Adele Astaire, leaning on the piano and tapping her foot, watched Gershwin's fingers, while Helen Westley, regarding the dancer's face, thought of her own tempestuous youth, and sighed, content. The Mexican painter, Miguel Covarrubias, lifted his eyes to the tall, luminous figure of their host.

All black and white, Carl Van Vechten stood, with folded arms, withdrawn into the shadows of heavy drapes. No one, seeing his face, would have described his silver hair as a halo. For him it was a gleaming crown—which he wore easily.

A Dutch Van Vechten had sailed up the Hudson and bartered with the Indians. This son, many times removed, born in the middle west, had returned to New York and claimed his rightful place. He claimed it all—nothing too brilliant or too vicious, nothing too luxurious or too bizarre, from Broadway to the Bowery, from Broad's Chop House in the Village to the Ritz and Crillon, from Carnegie Hall to Harlem—no part or crevice of the city was not his. His passion for New York was always fresh—returning from any spot upon the earth—the young and eager lover. He knew Paris and London, Amsterdam, Munich, Rome and Berlin. He loved New York best because, he said, "It is possible to be in New York and a great many other places at the same time!" For New York gave him bits of all the world and all its many people. And out of the kaleidoscopic, multicolored bits he could create the world for which he hungered. "One World" had not become a campaign slogan in those days, but with a regal gesture Carl Van Vechten would have called it into being. He prowled about the city searching for talent, for beauty, for that quality which the Greeks so cherished, which we weakly translate as "energy." A prince out of a tale, more closely related, perhaps, to Benvenuto Cellini; his zest for life and living was inexhaustible.

He built his "Villa Allegra" and to it summoned his Raphaels and Michelangelos.

To publishers, music conductors, dramatists and producers, an invitation to Carl Van Vechten's party, with his Russian-born wife, Fania Marinoff, held out the promise of a startling "discovery"; to New York's society folk it meant a thrilling evening and to a young artist or struggling musician—it meant a presentation at court. His parties were talked about on three continents. No one refused an invitation.

Gershwin had stopped playing. The company, released from the spell, reached for another drink. Gracious Fania Marinoff moved among the guests. Percy Hammond, dramatic critic, wondered if she might be persuaded to return to the stage. She only laughed and threw a glance of deep meaning toward her silent husband. His eyes answered with a sudden flash of dancing lights. A lady at his elbow had commented on the photograph of a large and beautiful cat. It hung, in a costly frame, upon the wall.

"But, madame, cats are more trustworthy than women!"

"Oh, Mr. Van Vechten," the lady protested. "I know you're an authority on cats. I haven't *read* your *Tiger in the House,* but—really—"

Van Vechten regarded the photograph. His eyes were warm.

"She had character and strength—though her grandmothers for generations back must have been easygoing."

The lady gasped and moved away. Van Vechten lit another cigarette. The smile about his lips was ironical, but his eyes began to dance again at a burst of husky laughter from across the room. Indeed, the tawny, statuesque figure, wrapped in brocaded gold, with a burnished turban on her head, from which dangled heavy earrings, presented an impressive picture. Her small head was held proudly, her black eyes flashed, her broad nostrils quivered. Van Vechten nodded his head.

"So—she might easily have held court on the Nile. A queen!"

It could only happen in New York! He was looking at Alelia Walker, daughter of a Negro washwoman, who through her industry, ingenuity and application had become a millionaire! Now, this daughter owned a palace on the Hudson and despised the people who fawned about her.

What was she saying to the group gathered about her? Glass in hand, Van Vechten moved across the room. And in that moment the butler murmured, "Mr. and Mrs. Paul Robeson and Mr. Lawrence Brown."

Everyone looked toward the doorway. A few had seen Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones* or *All God's Chillun;* others had heard something about the "Negro" football player. To most of them his name was unknown. But a shiver of anticipation went down everybody's spine.

Another of Carl's "discoveries"! Gracious! Who is that powerful dark man? What does he do? Those who knew something of him commented inside their heads, "Um-m—Carl Van Vechten's introducing Paul Robeson! Well!" Or maybe it's the wife!

The host moved forward quickly, his hand outstretched. Already he felt a deep affection for the younger dark man, with his ready, shy smile and rich voice. The stuff of plans for him was gathering in his mind. His rich endowment must be utilized. Their eyes were on a level, but Robeson's had none of Carl Van Vechten's imperiousness. Now, however, they expressed nothing but glowing welcome.

"Paul! I'm so glad you're here. And Mrs. Robeson—you are lovely!"

The compliment was deserved. There were more costly gowns in the room, but none more tasteful and becoming. Essie's best friend, a dressmaker, had turned all her very real

talent to her interest. This evening Mrs. Paul Robeson was like a fall leaf—green, fading into russet, with just a touch of dusky red. Her hair was piled high—Spanish fashion. Except for a single brilliant in the raven mass and an old brooch at her throat, she wore no jewelry. It was to be noted that several women's eyes narrowed speculatively as they studied her.

Stepping back, Robeson presented the slight, dark man at his side.

"This is Lawrence Brown. For the past four years he's been living in England acting as accompanist to Roland Hayes and to Beatrice Harrison, the cellist. He very kindly consented to play for me tonight."

"I am delighted, Mr. Brown. I heard you in recital at Aeolian Hall several years ago. You've returned to New York just in time to render very important service. You'll be going back to Europe with Paul Robeson before long." Their hands clasped for a moment and then the host turned to his guests. "Ladies and gentlemen, you'll all want to know the Robesons and Mr. Brown. And now—what will you drink?"

This was the extent of their formal introduction. It was enough. In a few moments they were part of the gay and scintillating crowd. Lawrence Brown, with the well-known tenor Roland Hayes, had been entertained in the drawing rooms of London, Paris and Vienna. His manners were impeccable. Essie, though her heart was fluttering, was charming. If Paul was a little awkward and slow of speech, the maternal in every woman longed to put him at ease. His slow, shy smile was devastating.

Carl Van Vechten, hovering about in the doorways, his face benevolent and smiling, watched everything. At just the proper moment, he announced casually:

"I've asked Paul to sing for us. Would you like to hear him now? Please, Paul."

No one in the room was fooled by this apparent lightness of tone. Those who really knew Carl Van Vechten knew that those things which claimed his deepest interest he always touched most lightly. It was not news that a six-foot, broad-shouldered Negro sang. It was generally thought that all Negroes can sing. True, the musicians were a little bored with this assumption. They were quick to check in their minds that Paul Robeson singing wouldn't be just "another Negro." They had heard the resonant tones of his speaking voice. So they too felt the little thrill which ran through the group as the company settled in their seats tingling with anticipation. Then Lawrence Brown, taking his place at the piano, sounded a running chord and George Gershwin's taut nerves let go and hummed with relief. The dark man's touch was a caress. Gershwin closed his eyes.

Paul stood there beside the piano—very straight in his tuxedo. He loved to sing while Larry Brown played. Theirs had been the happiest of meetings. For this evening, Essie had told him just to sing the songs they both knew, sing them as he did when they were alone—without any frills or fuss. But here in this softly lighted drawing room the whole idea seemed presumptuous. These people were the cream of music and dramatic circles—they were professionals—they were critics. What did he know about music? He looked at Larry, trying to recapture the bond between them. The grand piano was so large. He couldn't get close enough. Larry was playing the introduction now to their first song. Three times he played it. Why didn't Paul sing? Once more—changing the improvisation, sinking his fingers deep into the keys, unloosing all the music in this fine old instrument. Now—the voice came:

> Steal away, steal away,
> Steal away to Jesus.

Paul sang the words and from out of his wide throat came

his full, rich voice. It came in spite of him—but there was no magic.

Green trees a-bendin',
Po' sinnah stands a-tremblin'.

He could see the green and pink walls—the rich brocades—the gleaming golden bowls—the fragrance of costly perfumes was in his nostrils—eyes in the faces of beautiful women held him. This song had no place here. Yet he heard himself painstakingly reproducing each verse:

Ah ain't got long to stay here.

The song was ended. He bowed amid the patter of applause. Before he could turn away, Larry was playing his own rollicking arrangement of "Little David, Play on Your Harp." The music was light and gay and with some degree of spontaneity Paul picked up the words. He found himself singing more easily. There were smiles on the faces. They were enjoying it.

They were loud with praise when it was over. On the wave of compliments the company was conducted out to the buffet supper—helped themselves from heaping bowls and gathered in groups to chat. Paul avoided Essie. He felt he had let her down. He hadn't been "natural" at all. He was glad to give his full attention to answering questions directed at him by a fair-haired girl who spoke with a soft, breathless Virginia lilt. He hoped Mr. Van Vechten wasn't too disappointed. He saw him smiling at him now and was somewhat reassured.

Carl Van Vechten was not disturbed. True, he had heard Paul sing better leaning over the battered old piano up at Christine's, but—he shrugged his shoulders. The voice was there; magical beauty was there. He, who had heard all the great voices of his day, knew beyond all doubt. Now Paul's voice was cooped up. He thought of his own first fruitless

attempts at writing. Even after he knew he could write—the words did not come. Such things take time. He would see to it that Paul sang again and again and again. The moment would come—sooner or later—when his true artistry would burst all bonds.

"I was in Italy when war came." He murmured a response to a question he had somehow heard.

"How frightful! You did get out?" The lady hung on his answer.

"Obviously."

The lady moved on. Her host was watching Paul and Emily Clark, clever and winsome editor of *The Reviewer*. Undoubtedly, Emily was his "favorite little Southerner." Now she was evidently getting some exciting copy from Paul. Her blue eyes were blinking at a great rate. He smiled quizzically—perhaps thinking how Emily's papa would react to daughter's interests.

Paul Robeson set down the thin china plate. He took a deep breath.

"No, ma'am, I've never been South."

"Then you've missed a heap of good things."

Paul only smiled. He didn't want to hurt this nice girl's feelings by telling her that he was glad he'd missed whatever he had missed, that wild horses couldn't drag him down there where— Suddenly he was very tired. And then he saw James Weldon Johnson coming toward them.

Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, recognized writer and poet, this Negro filled the position of ambassador for his people at home and abroad. With his brother, the musician, J. Rosamond Johnson, he had written songs which were moving and popular. His courtly manners sprang from a sincere desire to serve. His charm was the reflection not only of a fine mind, but of a warm heart. With unfailing instinct he had sensed the discomfort of this young man, in whom he felt such pride. He

knew that Paul's song had not come forth that night. And he knew why. Now he made his way to him.

In a few minutes Paul's deep laugh was heard. They wandered back into the drawing room. George Gershwin and Lawrence Brown were at the piano, Brown playing snatches of something he had heard in Budapest. Someone, noting Paul with Johnson, called, "Oh, Mr. Robeson, have you heard Jim read his new poems?"

"No, I haven't. I'd certainly like to."

"Come on, Jim—one of the sermons."

"Yes," "Please, Jim," several voices called.

Laughing groups quieted down—waiting. Those who had drifted out into the hall looked back to see what was going on.

Fania Marinoff came in from the dining room, her guests served. She lifted her dark eyes and said in a low voice with just the slightest hint of Slavic hesitance, "I like best the *Creation*. Please, Jim, the *Creation*."

Johnson bowed with a little sweeping gesture. "My charming hostess' wish is law."

They came in from the other rooms and settled round him as he sat beside a stand inlaid with ivory. Paul's attention was caught by a painting hanging on the wall above the stand. His eyes followed the lines of an exquisite Indian girl poised before a fantastic oriental palace. Johnson was speaking:

"For the benefit of those who are not familiar with this subject matter may I say these poems are not original creations in the strict sense of the word. They are sermons—delivered by an old Negro preacher who had immersed himself in the powerful and graphic diction of the Bible. I have heard him many times—on some isolated plantation—in shanty, tumbled-down churches—in dim places lighted only by oil lamps and lanterns. When he stood up in his pulpit he did not use the dialect of the cotton fields and cabin. He was a trumpet, a trumpet sounding divine revelation. He spoke as all the oldest poets of

all peoples have spoken—with intonations flowing easily into music."

And then James Weldon Johnson stood up. He stood behind the ivory-inlaid stand. He closed his eyes a moment and the room was very still.

> And God stepped out on space,
> And He looked around and said:
> I'm lonely—
> I'll make me a world.

Paul leaned forward. He gripped the arms of his chair and did not feel them. The walls of the room were fading. He was hearing his father—the deep, rich voice of his father saying:

> And far as the eye of God could see
> Darkness covered everything,
> Blacker than a hundred midnights
> Down in a cypress swamp—
> Then God smiled
> And the light broke.

The breath of all outside had come into this room. The magic of a voice, the pulse of rhythm, clinging to the heart, engulfed them all. A trumpet sounded from a mountaintop heralding a God who had "rolled the darkness to one side and made the sun," who "bulged the mountains up" and "made the green grass sprout," who "made the lakes to cuddle down in the hollow of the ground," who "brought forth beasts and birds."

> Then God walked around,
> And God looked around
> On all that He had made;
> He looked at His sun—

Nothing was quite enough—this God—surrounded by all that He had done yet said:

> I'm lonely still.

"I'm lonely still"—men and women in that room echoed the cry. "I'm lonely still." But the poet's voice now sank to a whisper:

> Then God sat down—
> On the side of a hill where he could think;
> By a deep, wide river He sat down.
> God thought and thought,
> Till He thought: I'll make me a man!

Triumphant words—words which must become music—words which could only be sung:

> Up from the bed of the river
> God scooped the clay;
> And by the bank of the river
> He kneeled Him down.

The poet was no longer a gentleman in evening dress—he was a priest—a priest intoning his revelation. His body swayed, his eyes were closed, his voice rose and fell with increasing intensity— "This Great God Almighty"

> Like a mammy bending over her baby,
> Toiling over a lump of clay
> Till He shaped it in His own image—
> Then into it He breathed the breath of life
> And man became a living soul.
> Amen. Amen.

They could not move until he made a gesture of release. He sat down amid a silence that was broken only gradually. Paul passed his hands across his brow. He was coming back from some far-distant place. Now they were talking all around him. James Weldon Johnson was responding graciously. But Paul was tongue-tied. Now he realized how far short he had been. To this man—nothing had mattered. He had transcended this one room—he had soared over the heads of all these people—he had carried them with him. There in the

room he had created something which had not existed before.

Paul rose and looked around. Suddenly, he wanted to get away. Across the room Essie answered the look in his eyes and came quickly. Then Carl Van Vechten laid his hand on his arm.

"We'll get together in a day or so, Paul."

Paul wanted to thank him, wanted to express his appreciation, wanted to say all the things that should be said, but somehow he could not. He heard his wife and Lawrence Brown chatting amiably, bidding the guests good night, moving graciously to the door. Their host accompanied them. Paul managed to stammer something. He hardly knew what. He was silent in the elevator. Outside the cold air was welcome against his face. At the corner of Fifth Avenue they hailed a taxi. When he had assisted his wife and Brown had climbed in after her, he said quickly, "Please—I'll walk. Don't wait up for me."

Before they could protest, he had fled, hurrying down the street, hatless. He had to be alone. He had to draw apart and hear that "still, small voice" that was whispering inside of him. He had to look more closely at himself, the "creator" of a new and shining beauty. He turned aside to find "the side of a hill" where he could "sit down"—where he could "sit down all alone—and think."

Days and weeks became months. Lenox Avenue, Macdougal Street, Washington Square no longer marked boundaries for the Robesons. The circle widened and many doormen just off Fifth Avenue recognized the striking couple. Hardly a week passed that Paul Robeson did not sing for some discriminating, critical and faultlessly garbed group. He grew accustomed to his dinner jacket, to huge grand pianos and soft lights. More- and more he was becoming able to shut out surroundings, to breathe into those old songs their first, spontaneous meanings, to sing them as the old folks did—not to entertain, but to

relieve an aching, burning heart, to lift the weight of some poor traveler's load, to give eyes to the blind, to straighten out some narrow, crooked road.

Then one evening the Provincetown Players, stumbling over some dusty "flies," looked at each other and said, "Let's present Paul in a concert!"

They dropped their saws and hammers, wiped the paint from their hands and grinned. But—of course. What a grand idea!

The next morning everybody was tearing around like mad. "Fitzi" had already worked out all business details. They would have it at the Greenwich Village Theater, where a larger crowd could be accommodated. Jimmy Light and Harold McGee had worked out plans for staging and artistic lighting. Stella Hanau was already planning publicity. Sunday evening, April 19, was decided upon. The idea "caught on" in every quarter. On the day before, April 18, 1925, Heywood Broun wrote in his column "It Seems to Me," appearing in the *New York World:*

"I have heard Paul Robeson sing many times, and I want to recommend this concert to all those who like to hear Spirituals. It seems to me that Robeson does a little better with such a song than anyone else I know; he is closer, I think, to the fundamental spirit of the music."

Walter White, through the *Associated Negro Press,* stressed the fact that this recital would be unique and the first of its kind—a program of all-Negro music, sung simply and without flourish, by one who made no artistic claims, but was sponsored by such recognized connoisseurs of art as Carl Van Vechten, Konrad Bercovici, and Percy Hammond.

It rained that Sunday, but before six o'clock the sky cleared and the soft, spring evening was very lovely. Provincetowners were doing the unusual and "dressing." This was an occasion! Their unaccustomed plunge into "society ways" delayed their

arrival. It was nearly eight-thirty when most of them reached the Greenwich Village Theater. Many could not get in! A huge crowd filled the lobby and spilled out upon the sidewalk in front. The breathless ticket seller was trying to squeeze in a few more "standees." The Provincetowners pushed their way through a side door and into the wings of the concert hall. They would not be able to see Paul at all, but they were so joyfully excited that they did not mind. At least they could watch the audience.

His first number was "Go Down, Moses."

Thousands of people in many lands and countries have now heard Paul Robeson sing "Go Down, Moses." But that April evening in Greenwich Village, for the first time, it was as if he were a trumpet through which came the command, majestic, terrible and unequivocal.

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt lan'
An' tell old Pharaoh
To let—*my—people—go!*

He brought them there into the concert hall—all the oppressed peoples of the world—weary, watching shadows—holding their breath—waiting for deliverance.

Let—my—people—go!

The audience sat as if afraid to move, hardly daring to applaud between the numbers. At the close of the first group the applause was deafening.

The Spirituals were followed by a group of songs composed by Negro composers—little songs in dialect—little songs which he sang with warmth and a smile in his voice.

Later he sang "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," and every mother's heart wept.

At last he came to the final song on the program. It was

"Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho." Lawrence Brown swung into the opening. This was his own arrangement. It was a joyously abandoned melody. The notes strutted and crowed:

Joshua fit de battle of Jericho
An' tha walls came a-tumblin' down!

Joshua—his robes a-flyin', his trumpet at his lips—blowin' that horn—cake-walkin' around Jericho!

They clapped! They cheered! They waved handkerchiefs in the air! They stamped their feet!

"More! More!" they shouted. They would not let him stop.

He smiled and sang another song—another and another—and another. Still they shouted, "More! More!"

Encore followed encore. He sang all the songs he and Larry knew. After nodding to each other they repeated songs. Both of them were so happy—so happy that the audience was pleased! He sang until he was exhausted—until he could only smile and bow. The audience too was limp. People sighed and looked at each other. They smiled through tears they had not realized were there.

And behind the last row in the theater, a tall man, all black and white, with silver hair, stood quietly. He was content. This was what he had planned. His eyes danced. He knew it would come—he knew the voice was there—he knew that all this vital, living, breathing beauty would come forth.

How foolish were those who sought to build barriers around such a man—to shut him off—to claim superiority because of accident of pigmentation! Paul Robeson belonged to all the world. Whatever walls they built around him would "come tumblin' down." This is something they would have to learn. Carl Van Vechten smiled again. He was thinking that human beings so often were far less wise than—cats!

The walls were down. Three months later Paul Robeson crossed the Atlantic Ocean and was in England.

13

MERRIE ENGLAND

IT WAS NOT RAINING in London; there was not even a fog over the Thames that August morning when, shortly before noon, the boat train leisurely pulled into King's Cross station and from one of the compartments tumbled Paul Robeson, James Light, Harold McGee, their wives and luggage. They were in high spirits. But they were no sooner out on the platform than they missed the clang, clatter, push and rush which so definitely characterizes large railway stations as they knew them.

Even the porters were quietly dignified and unperturbed!

"Londoners *may* sometimes hurry," whispered Jimmy Light, "but they *never* hustle."

Instinctively they had lowered their voices as they were swallowed in the cavernous gloom of the dungeon-like waiting room.

"Look at that fireplace!" Essie thought it such an extraordinary place for a fireplace. Harold McGee shrugged his shoulders.

"How else do you suppose they keep warm in the winter?"

"But what can that fireplace do in this huge place?"

"Nothing, my dear, absolutely nothing. I assure you."

They laughed cautiously, not wishing to disturb the half-dozen male characters right out of Dickens and an old lady in a Queen Mary hat, who were squatting on ancient chairs about

the place. Mrs. Paul blinked her eyes. Surely she had wandered out onto a medieval stage set.

Then they were at the curb. The girls fell back, wildly looking around for some safe spot.

"Easy there," soothed Harold McGee. "Anybody's first sight of left-hand driving raises goose pimples. You'll get used to it."

"Good heavens! Why isn't everybody killed?"

The question appeared logical. The narrow street was crowded with people and darting, ramshackle taxicabs. And through this mass plowed leviathan two-story buses which seemed to churn everything in the wrong direction!

England must be a haven for the left-handed. They were to learn that the English eat on the left, drive on the left, shift gears with the left hand. Jimmy Light looked at the swaying buses. He shook his head.

"Maybe I'm still dizzy from the boat. I haven't had a drink—yet."

"It's hot!" Paul was fanning himself with his straw hat.

An elderly English gentleman, passing along the walk, allowed his eyes to pass over "the American tourists."

"Hot, indeed!" he thought with some degree of irony. As a matter of fact, London was gasping under a heat wave which was generally referred to as coming "from the United States." It was reported ninety in the shade! Office windows and doors were tightly shut, as the only provision for tempering the heat in a land where electric fans were nonexistent. And the English gentleman, ignoring the drops of sweat trickling down his nose, wore the thickest of all-wool suits, with its massive watch chain and fob, in which the well-dressed Englishman appears in public at any season. Only Americans might affect Palm Beach suits, alpaca coats and straw hats.

Essie was still staring into the traffic. Paul laughed at the expression on her face.

"Well, shall we try our luck?"

They hailed a taxi and climbed in. It sagged under the added weight of their bags.

"Do you suppose it can make it?" Harold's wife asked with real concern.

They did successfully reach their hotel where rooms had been reserved. Upstairs they upset the establishment's morning routine by demanding "hot water" for "baths." The manager was patient. One expected such idiosyncrasies from Americans! Finally they were settled. Light and McGee hurried out to the theater. Paul, eager to see London, went for a walk.

The trio had come to London to do *The Emperor Jones,* presented by the London producer, H. M. Harwood, but directed and stage-managed by the Provincetowners, James Light and Harold McGee. Paul Robeson now had no misgivings regarding the part. There was only the matter of adjusting himself to a new supporting cast and new surroundings.

As Paul walked slowly away from the small but comfortable hotel he could not but draw some comparisons. Bedford Place was a quiet, unpretentious street of modest dwellings and hostelries similar to the one in which they were stopping. He passed several uniformed nursemaids pushing huge baby carriages. While they did not stare at him, he was conscious that eyes followed him with mingled interest and curiosity. His height, his dark skin, his quiet dignity made him a rare sight in Bedford Place. Yet there had been neither commotion nor embarrassment when he and his wife had registered along with the other Provincetowners at the hotel.

At the corner he boarded one of the large buses and climbed to the second deck. He had not bothered to look where it was going. It didn't matter. From this excellent gallery seat, he could see London.

"It's such an old city!"

He knew his history, and seeing the brown olive-green brick

buildings, weathered, solid and so exact, the stout iron railings, and sidewalks worn with the tread of many feet, the compact, green open spaces, like some remaining remnants of primeval woods, with an occasional mellowed statue, grimy with soot, washed smooth by many rains—the thought of age came foremost to his mind. London Bridge, the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, 10 Downing Street! Paul saw none of these places that afternoon. But all the time they were just behind his consciousness. . . . Power . . . the British Empire. . . .

From his high bus seat he looked down upon London's people. And studying them, he frowned slightly. Vague questions fluttered in the back of his mind. He began to wonder what the British Empire meant to those people down there in the streets.

By the time rehearsals got under way the Robesons had rented a little place in Chelsea—a flat, the English called it. For centuries Chelsea had been the favorite retreat of artists, actors and authors. It is one of the most attractive sections of London. When Chelsea was a country village Sir Thomas More had lived there and was visited by such men as Henry VIII, Holbein and Erasmus. Twenty-four Cheyne Row was the residence of Thomas Carlyle. It is now a museum open to the public. The small garden in the back has changed little in a hundred years. Any passer-by may point out a tree and say, "Thomas Carlyle used to sit there—under that tree." Turner, the painter, lived a few doors down, and just around the corner, on the more pretentious avenue, George Eliot lived and died. John Locke, Dean Swift, Addison, Gay and Smollett lived in Chelsea.

Living in Chelsea was for Paul like living between the pages of a fascinating old book. Every day brought new delight.

Meanwhile the August heat wave had ushered in a gorgeous September. Vacationers returned to the city; all London was enjoying a period of exhilaration. The somewhat harassed

producers of *The Emperor Jones* began to take heart. It began to look as if problems had been solved and the opening was announced at the Ambassadors Theatre, September 10, 1925. Londoners were not unanimous in their evaluation of Eugene O'Neill, but it was admitted he was a "promising young playwright." Now the starring of an American Negro, in a play London had never seen, aroused keen interest.

The opening was brilliant. Eugene O'Neill's one-act play *Long Voyage Home* was the curtain raiser. This moody, somber saga of the sea held the audience, and when the curtain fell applause was most generous. But in the lobby afterwards they talked only of the play which was to follow—the real event of the evening. As the theater darkened, they waited expectantly.

Robeson was greeted with polite applause—a well-bred gesture of courtesy to a visiting artist. As the play moved forward it became increasingly evident that a large portion of the audience was puzzled. The English people were missing the significance of the psychological unfolding. A people who resent having their emotions aroused, they shrank away from that persistent throbbing of a drum. Yet they were held by the power of Robeson's acting, and at the close called him back again and again.

Reviews in the next few days expressed varied opinions. One critic described the play as an undoubted success, while another set it down as a fiasco. *The Outlook,* October 3, 1925: "Doubtless the rich melody of Mr. Robeson's voice, and the sensitiveness of his acting, helped to intensify the contrast and to make Eugene O'Neill's protracted soliloquy seem a braver, more successful attempt to capture the imagination than it actually is. . . . these nightmare effects, the visions moving and miming to the hectic beat of the tomtom and Jones' straining pulse, are only moderately effective. But it says much for the art with which Mr. Robeson sustains his part and for the

splendour of his voice that one was never at any stage less than interested, if never wholly absorbed."

The *London Daily Observer,* September 13, 1925, was even more critical: "Mr. O'Neill abolishes rules altogether. . . . He is a wasteful dramatist, starts his plays clumsily and extravagantly because he is too impatient to work closely on them. . . . Mr. Paul Robeson, a Negro actor, gave a fine performance as Jones, though, I thought, it was too intellectual. . . . Mr. Robeson would, I fancy, be extraordinarily impressive as Jim Harris in Mr. O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings.* Perhaps Mr. Harwood will produce this play while Mr. Robeson is here."

So "discriminating theatregoers" continued to fill the Ambassadors. Each one had to see it for himself.

Paul felt the strain of the exacting role. It was a most exhausting part to play—not one in which the actor could successfully employ the tricks of the trade. Each night he gave it everything he had. He felt a sense of responsibility to everyone who had worked for its production. He wanted it to succeed. He grew in stature and that growth did not pass unnoticed.

Hugh Walpole invited him to lunch and was deeply impressed with his simplicity; Ralph Stock, just returned from a cruise around the world, anchored his yacht in the Thames just below Battersea Bridge and gave a party on board for the star of *The Emperor Jones.* Not because of the society names who made up the list of guests, but because Paul Robeson sang that night on the Thames, this party was recorded in *The Evening News,* September 15, 1925:

"About one in the morning something hushed the gay talk to silence. Mr. Paul Robeson began to sing Negro Spirituals. On the stage his speaking voice is rich and vibrant, like an organ. When he sings, as he sang last night, softly, crooningly, he can make his hearers mute with simple admiration.

"It will be long before any of us will forget the spectacle of this magnificently built man, seated on a stool, his white collar and his white cuffs standing out against his dark suit and his dark face; his rolling eyes directed to the cabin roof; the soft beauty of his voice."

When Paul sang, he forgot his problems.

They had hoped the play would run into December, but it closed the latter part of October.

Everybody told Paul he needed a rest anyhow, but he could not be happy about the closing. Old and new friends rallied round, urging him to remain in London for a while.

"Now you can have some fun!" they insisted.

John Payne, an American Negro, a musician who had firmly established himself in London years before, invited the Robesons to his beautiful home, offering every gesture of hospitality and genuine friendliness. The Johnstones, of the Negro dance team "Layton and Johnstone" included them in a gay motor trip, enlarged the circle of their admirers and praised his work.

Paul wanted to respond to these gestures graciously and wholeheartedly. He had been working very hard and under a strain. He *was* tired. But he was also getting colder and colder!

"But, darling," Essie patiently explained, "it's not so cold. Why, the thermometer only says—"

"I don't care what the thermometer says," Paul interrupted irritably. "I'm freezing to death in this murky city. Why don't some of these fine folks put furnaces in their houses?"

He had posed a question over which many an American has racked his brain. Apparently the average Englishman cannot be convinced that a furnace is desirable. He will argue, even while shivering under many layers of wraps, that central heating, an accursed invention of effete Americans, brings in its train a long list of misfortunes. The British believe that we

die early and often because we drink ice water and keep our buildings "grossly overheated."

The flat which the Robesons had rented in Chelsea was charming and modern in every respect—except that one was supposed to keep warm with two small fireplaces which blistered Paul on one side while allowing him to freeze on the other. And shaving in the bathroom became a menace.

"One morning I'll cut my throat," he grumbled. "I shiver all over."

Essie laughed, but she too was beginning to wonder if perhaps the popularity of sports did not spring from the necessity of taking a frequent run outdoors in order to get warm. And she could not get used to guests keeping on their coats all through a formal dinner!

Mrs. Paul was concerned about Paul's throat. She bought him heavy woolen underwear, but had to send home for his galoshes as he took size twelve and she could not find that size in London.

They had just about decided to go home to Harlem when a letter came from their friend Glenway Westcott:

"So if the show has closed you might just as well see the Mediterranean. I am at Villefranche, a lovely little village nestling at the foot of the southern Alps, midway between Monte Carlo and Nice. Its tiny harbour has to be seen to be believed. Such skies! Such sunshine is—"

"Sunshine!" Paul breathed the word reverently.

"Shall we—" Essie looked up.

"Lady, what are we waiting for?"

There were, however, some delays. Mrs. Paul found herself involved in endless complications regarding passports and visas. The war, declared over in 1918, had tightened all regulations regarding moving from one European country to another. Officials scrutinized each request with bland suspicion. They were fully aware of the thin, brittle surface of the "peace."

Americans, with their influence, dollars and curiosity, were particularly difficult to handle.

Essie answered numerous questions with smiling good humor, produced ample evidence of their good faith with charming assurances that the Robesons' sole and only purpose in going to the Riviera was to stretch out in the sunshine—a reason sufficiently frivolous finally to convince the proudly stoic Britisher.

So came that morning in November when Paul, stripped to the waist, lay on a tiny, grilled balcony and watched the sun sparkling in the blue of the Mediterranean. Only a broad concrete walk separated their gleaming white hotel from the sea. In front, across the fairy harbor, were sprawling villas and gardens climbing the hills of Cap Ferrat. On either side of the harbor of Villefranche-sur-Mer rose hills covered with ancient grapevines and orange, olive and palm trees. Beyond the hills loomed the Alps, grim, cold and majestic.

Paul lay with his arms under his head, flat on his back, while all his long, smooth body drank in the sunshine. He could feel knotted muscles slowly untying themselves; he could feel his nerves fairly purring with contentment. He looked down the length of his body at his great, bare feet. He wiggled the toes ecstatically and laughed aloud like a little boy.

"Solid! Man, this is solid comfort!"

A chord strummed within his being, jerking him to his elbow. Somebody was singing. Leaning across the rail he saw down at the beach a fisherman beside a small boat which rocked gently in the water. The man was doing something to a net and as he worked he sang—his voice deep and rollicking—his song full of the sea and sky and mountains behind him. Impulsively Paul let out a shout and waved his arm. The man looked up. Paul was already fastening on his sandals. He grabbed up a shirt tossed on the stool beside him and, pulling it

over his wide shoulders, was down the grilled stairway of the balcony.

The young fisherman, at the water's edge, watched the surprising figure racing toward him. He was puzzled. Surely the hotel guest did not think he had fish so early in the morning. Then he stared.

Madre mia! What a man! So much of size—so black—and such a shining face!

Paul stood now looking down at the slender, bronze, barefoot *pescatore*. He grinned, realizing this was one of the few Italian words he knew. The other's face broke into an answering smile. The young man tossed the long hair from his eyes and waited. Paul pointed to the boat. He'd try out his French.

"Je desire aller avec vous—s'il vous plait."

The young man threw back his head and laughed. How droll! What a funny man! But—what a nice one. He liked his voice. He responded with a rapid flow of French, which rippled about Paul's head in waves of liquid sound. They conveyed no information to him, however. When the young man paused for breath Paul pulled his hand out of his pocket and, extending it, the palm covered with silver, he repeated his request in the same hesitant voice.

The young man looked at the money. He understood. He had work to do—several nets to take in. The boat was small and the stranger's fine clothes would be spattered. Still—if he cared to pay. . . . He had not asked to be taken anywhere—he had only asked to "go with." So, stepping into his boat, he waved his hand graciously for Paul to follow.

"Oh! *Merci, beaucoup merci.*" Paul wanted to convey his deep gratitude. For some strange reason the fisherman threw back his head and laughed again. There was nothing offensive in his manner, however. Paul grinned. He had few illusions about his French.

The little boat tilted perilously until Paul was settled. Then the fisherman took up his oars and they were pushing out from shore. Paul drew a deep breath. This was good—good! He motioned that he would gladly take an oar, but the fisherman shook his head. The stranger did not look as if he knew much about a boat.

In a little while they came to a spot marked with bobbing corks and then they were dragging in a net—filled with flapping, squirming fish. Paul was helpful here. It was a good haul. They went on to the next spot. Here there was disappointment. The net hung limp and empty, held together by a few loose threads. Somebody or something had cut the net. Not only were there no fish, but the net itself was worthless. The fisherman trembled with rage. He sputtered maledictions. Then his shoulders sagged and a great weariness passed over his face.

In that moment Paul felt a stab of sharp realization. This morning's trip—such a delightful interlude for him—was this man's livelihood. He looked at the fisherman more closely. It was a young, sensitive face, but very thin. In the midst of all the bright, warm sunshine and abundant air, there should be no such hollows in his cheeks—nor was his chest rounded and full. His hands, with their long fingers, were rough and calloused; his bare feet were cut and discolored. Would anyone dependent on him go hungry because the net was empty? Was there a serious reason for his face to be so troubled?

But now the fisherman was again bending over his oars. Hopefully he scanned the water. Perhaps the next net would be full. Paul found himself breathing that wish fervently. Then Paul began to sing. This was his only way of saying what he'd like to say.

His voice went out across the waters and many a fisherman rested a moment on his oars—or looked out toward the water from mending his net. Behind the young man's face a light glowed softly. It transformed his features. They came to the

last net, but he would not move until the song had ended. Then they drew it up. It had a few fish. But this time it did not seem to matter so much. They must get home! Maria must hear his new friend sing—and *grandmère,* too. *Madre mia!* It would ease her pain. Paul was no longer "the stranger." He had become his "friend."

Swiftly now the little boat went through the water. They approached the landing place for the hotel. The fisherman looked at Paul. Would he give a signal? But Paul elaborately imitated the Italian shrug of shoulders. The fisherman laughed with relief. He called out as they approached the fishing hamlet at the end of the harbor. The children came running down the beach to meet them, but stopped, frightened, gazing at the strange man who was with Tomasino. But he assured them with many words and the big man smiled and took their hands. So they followed closely behind when Tomasino went into his house, taking the stranger with him.

The girl with her round-faced baby might have been one of Raphael's Madonnas. The fisherman spoke to her gently and her face lit up and turned to Paul. Then the young man took Paul by the hand and led him to where, drawn close to the only opening in the hovel, was a withered old lady who might have been one of the suffering souls described by Dante. Here the fisherman bent down a moment. Then, looking up at Paul with entreaty in his eyes, he whispered, *"Chante, mon ami!"*

And Paul sang, stooping to avoid the blackened roof. He sang while the girl rested the baby on her hip and the children gazed wide-eyed in the opening. He sang until the fisherman touched him on the arm and whispered, *"Elle dort."*

Then they went outside. A couple of boys were cleaning the fish. Several others gathered round, curiously regarding the stranger. Now Tomasino's shouts brought his neighbors and soon Paul realized he was being welcomed by the en-

tire hamlet. They came and squatted near by, some still mending their nets. They brought him wine, poured from skins and surprisingly good. But he, thinking of the empty net, finally managed to convey the information that he wanted to buy the fish—all they had brought in. He shook his head, not understanding when they said he was paying too much. When the fish was brought he had difficulty making them understand his halting words. But finally they did.

"Mangeons! Tout le monde!"

It was to be a feast—on the beach. Accompanied by the children, Paul found a place to buy figs and dates. He returned —heaping them on the sand. He asked questions. Some of the men spoke a little English. He learned that the young fisherman's name was Tomasino—that all the older men had been killed in the war—that years ago some of them had had vineyards, but now there was nothing—nothing but the sea. When the women brought the hot fish it was accompanied by loaves of warm bread. He was hungry and he ate well.

And afterwards he sang for them. Behind him rose the Alps, in front of him stretched the Mediterranean, and all around him on the sand knelt the fishermen of Villefranche-sur-Mer.

The sun, a blazing ball of fire, was sinking into the sea when very slowly he followed the water's edge, returning to the hotel. He went around the side and climbed to the balcony. His conscience was bothering him—a little. He had some vague memory of plans having been made the night before to drive over to Monte Carlo for dinner.

A note propped up on the dressing table confirmed his suspicions. The "gang" had arrived and waited for him. Now they were gone—to Monte Carlo, taking Mrs. Paul along.

"Gosh, she'll be sore!"

He looked around for his swimming trunks, found them

and put them on. He'd have a quick swim and go to bed early. Tomasino was coming for him at sunrise in the morning.

On other days he did go to Monte Carlo and Nice with his wife. He was invited to Mary Garden's lovely villa in Beaulieu. He ran into classmates from Rutgers and Columbia, novelists and artists he had met at Carl Van Vechten's parties. All insisted that he meet their friends. And so the circle widened.

One day, while strolling along the Promenade at Nice, someone clapped him on the back with a "Hello there, Paul Robeson!"

It was Claude McKay, the Negro poet from the West Indies. Now his dark-brown face was glowing with welcome.

After the loud exchange of greetings Paul said, "You look as if you've just fallen in love. What is it? What have you been doing?"

McKay smiled almost mysteriously. He said, "I've been in Russia." He slipped his arm through Paul's. "Some of my friends are here. Come, I want them to meet you."

They walked through the gardens until they came to a table overlooking the Promenade. The two men rose and heartily shook Paul's hand. The girl gave him a bright and friendly smile. The older man had iron-gray hair and the strong chiseled face of one who has done much living. The younger was a blond giant. Measuring him with his eyes, Paul thought what a football player he'd make.

McKay immediately plunged into a vivid account of Paul's exploits, with a few questions regarding recent happenings. Even as they listened, saying nothing, Paul was conscious that each of these people was like a highly charged dynamo. Before he realized it he was talking about himself.

"I expect to return to America soon for a concert tour. We're hoping the plans will go through."

"But—your acting?" The girl spoke slowly, enunciating each syllable.

"There are so few Negro parts in serious plays. Negro actors are inevitably driven to variety or revue. And I'm not interested in doing that."

"But that is incredible!" The older man's voice rumbled in his throat.

The girl smiled.

"You will—perhaps—go into—the opera. I have read of the—the Metropolitan. I—understand—it is very—good."

Paul laughed.

"The Metropolitan Opera Company? I hardly think so. No, I'll just concentrate on Negro music—the folk songs, work songs and gang songs are really very beautiful."

The older man spread his hands.

"You limit yourself. You with your great gifts should take the high road—not a shaded lane."

Paul looked at him sharply. What did he mean? The old man continued:

"People are singing all over the world. Today their songs are separated by mountains and rivers and oceans, by drawn bayonets held across lines, by strong high walls and customs and taboos, by ignorance. Some of the songs have been smothered and silenced forever." He looked out toward the sea a moment. "But some day a great artist will come who will stand on a high place. He will sing the songs of all the people. Hearing him, the people will make a glorious discovery. They will discover a secret which has been hidden from them through the ages—hidden by the powers of darkness—hidden because it sets men free. And free men seek the light." He was silent a moment, then he lifted his piercing eyes to Paul. "They will know that all the songs are one—that they blend into a single mighty chorus."

They looked at him. Paul could not speak. It was as if a hand had been laid on his heart.

A moment later they were telling him about Russia. Then Paul knew the reason for their hardly suppressed excitement.

"One-sixth of the globe, Paul—one-sixth of all the earth's resources uncovered for the use of everybody!" exclaimed McKay.

"We do not tell of gold nuggets lying in the road—as in your California," the younger man cautioned with a twinkle in his eye.

"You should see the black soil!"

Again the old man spoke.

"Russia now has her opportunity. Russia must work and sacrifice to seize this moment. Russia will do this because she has had the courage to tear down old and rotten walls."

They told him many things that afternoon. And as they talked he thought of the fishermen, their wives and children, huddled in the coves which could be seen from the Promenade. Tourists pointed out their picturesque "color" but Paul had been inside the huts. He knew now why they mended the rotten nets so painstakingly, why the children grabbed his nuts and raisins so ravenously. He thought of the women selling flowers on the streets of London. On the stage and in songs they were always young and pretty. But in London they'd been old and toothless. He'd known they were cold and shivering. He thought of the beggars crouched against St. Paul's Cathedral. He thought of Harlem.

That night as he and Essie sat on their tiny balcony, holding hands like lovers and watching the moon create a haze of silver beauty, Paul said, after a long silence, "I'm going to Russia."

Essie turned startled eyes on him.

"Darling—tonight?"

Paul chuckled deep in his throat and slid his fingers up the velvet softness of her arm.

A few days later a cablegram arrived. They must get back. Paul Robeson was scheduled for a series of recitals, the first at Town Hall in New York, January 5, 1926.

14

THE TEMPO ACCELERATES

PAUL ROBESON RETURNED TO New York to find himself a celebrity. He was twenty-seven years old, six feet three inches, and two hundred and five pounds of rippling muscles, evenly distributed. He was in the best of health, his eyes clear and bright, his skin smooth. Mrs. Paul, watching her husband crossing a room to her, would shake her head. He was *too* good-looking.

The Town Hall concert was heralded as "Paul Robeson's First Appearance since his London Success." Tickets were soon sold out. Harlem and Greenwich Village vied with each other in honoring the "returned son." He could hardly find time for rehearsals with Lawrence Brown, who had remained in New York awaiting his return.

On the evening of January 5 they faced an entirely different audience from the one in the Greenwich Village Theater. Here was no host of true and tried friends, of fellow artists and musicians eager to acclaim one whom they already loved. The Town Hall crowd was highly critical, almost skeptical. Many were certain this new singer had been much overrated. They came to do some careful evaluating.

But somehow they forgot. They stayed in their seats begging for encores.

It was the same in Philadelphia, in Baltimore. There were those who said that his was a "freak success," that "it won't last." Where had he studied? With whom had he studied?

Nobody seemed to know. Yet this young man seemed to have everything.

Some amount of cockiness on his part would have been forgiven, was even expected. When there was no sign of it they wondered. Perhaps this unassuming simplicity was itself a pose. Those closest to him laughed. They knew that all Europe couldn't "turn Paul's head."

Paul would have been the last to classify himself as a shrinking violet. The truth was that he simply was not "puffed up" over what was happening. In fact, he was far from satisfied with himself. He was pleased that things were going so well. He was happy that he hadn't let his friends down. He was anxious to get out with them and share all the exciting experiences that had come to him. But much that he read about himself seemed like fantastic exaggerations. He wished they wouldn't write such things. Life was far more complex than he had imagined. Now that he was home he wanted to read, to get around and ask questions. Even while he fingered his Phi Beta Kappa key he fretted about things he did not know and couldn't do. Without being articulate about the matter he realized that he was just beginning. Why should he be conceited?

His level-headed good sense and even temper served him well when he appeared in Chicago. That "Windy City" refuses to be impressed by London successes. Publicity for the concert had been scant, and on a bitter cold February evening Robeson walked out upon the platform of Orchestra Hall to face a half-filled auditorium. The wide empty spaces were chilled, but Paul, bowing low to the generous applause which greeted him, thought, "Trying to get warm, poor devils."

It was a valiant little audience, gay in satins and dinner jackets. Paul smiled warmly and as he nodded to Brown at the piano he was saying to himself, "Anybody who'd come out on a night like this to hear me sing deserves something special!"

He gave it to them, generously, with his whole heart. And the next day's Chicago papers noted that fact. Said Glenn Dillaid Gunn, writing in the *Chicago Herald-Examiner,* February 11, 1926:

"I have just heard the finest of all Negro voices and one of the most beautiful in the world. Those who were fortunate enough to be present last night in Orchestra Hall, when Paul Robeson made his first Chicago appearance, will testify that I do not exaggerate. In the soft mellow resonance, in sympathetic appeal, in its organ-like ease and power, it is distinguished among the great voices of the times. . . ."

The *Chicago Evening American*, February 11, referred to both Robeson and Lawrence Brown, his accompanist, as "singers."

"These two men are genuine artists—and their singing is something more than art, while it is as well delightful and stimulating diversion. They merely sing with tremendous vitality, delicacy, and poetry; and they carry the public with them every step of the way. . . . Robeson's diction is so clear and intelligible that one needs no program notes, and he never mouths nor sacrifices the timbre of the tone for mere pronunciation."

They began comparing him to Chaliapin.

It was in Boston that his untrained voice failed him. They thought disaster was upon them. Actually it was a simple matter of a cold and a throat over which the singer had no control.

The night trip from New York had been made on a drafty train. The wind, sweeping in from the bay that morning, cut like a knife. Mr. and Mrs. Robeson and Mr. Brown took a taxi at the depot and drove to a modest hotel. They were refused accommodations. They had understood that reservations had been made, explained that they were there for the recital that night at Symphony Hall. There were no rooms—for them. They drove to several other hotels; each time were turned

away. Paul, his coat drawn tight about him, was shivering. Finally, in desperation, Essie asked the driver to take them to the expensive Copley Plaza. Courteously and without question they were registered there and went immediately to their rooms. Essie put Paul to bed and doctored him through the day. But by night his throat was stiff and tight.

He insisted on dressing and going to the hall. In the dressing room he sat holding his head and trying to restrain the chattering of his teeth. Essie was alarmed, wanted to call a doctor, but he waved her aside.

It was an agonizing concert.

Next day's newspapers were kind, commenting on the large, attentive audience and the obvious cold. It seems incredible that Paul, Essie and Larry should have returned to New York completely discouraged. Paul saw his world going to pieces. He was sick in body and spirit. It was some time before he could be convinced that all he needed was a knowledge of singing technique, a period of hardening training for his throat—and less unfortunate exposure to the cold.

Meanwhile, a play had been written especially for him. He turned eagerly to it, believing he had failed as a singer. Before summer came he was rehearsing *Black Boy,* by Jim Tully and Frank Dazey.

Of this venture, Alexander Woollcott said:

"After his superb performance in *The Emperor Jones* there seemed to be no next step for Robeson in our theater, so he lifted up that magnificent voice of his in the Spirituals of his people and the crowd flocked to hear him. Now, however, the old hankering to use his gifts as an actor has brought him back for the present ornery undertaking. This concocted show is about a vagrant who wins the heavyweight championship of the world, loses it one night after a spree and at the end of the play is taking to the road again, back in the old blue overalls once more, with his harmonica at his lips."

Most of the cast was white, but they needed a light-skinned colored girl to play opposite Robeson. Horace Liveright, the producer, had noticed a pretty, vivacious girl dancing opposite Al Moore at the Club Alabam. He sent for her.

So it happened that one morning Fredi Washington found herself in a downtown casting office being considered to play opposite Paul Robeson—a chorus girl's wildest dream come true! Inwardly she was shaking with fright, but she managed to hang on to some semblance of composure. When asked to read the lines, she lifted her big eyes and asked if she might not study them a little and come back the next day for the reading. Jimmy Light, the Provincetowner, and Paul's close friend, was stage managing the show. He liked the way this girl had walked into the room, he liked her voice, he liked the little flush of excitement on her face—in fact, he liked the girl. He gave her the script and told her to come back.

Hugging the precious pages, Fredi hastened to Abbey Mitchell, star of the Lafayette Theater, who had recently returned from the music halls of Paris and London.

"Help me—please, Miss Mitchell," begged Fredi. "Think of it—think of it—a chance to play with Paul Robeson!"

"Um—um—" Abbey Mitchell pursed her lips and studied the girl. "What do you know about acting?"

"Nothing." The girl was so humble, so anxious, her eyes pleaded so eloquently.

"You do know how to handle your body—and you have a lovely voice." Miss Mitchell spoke more sharply: "Hold your head up—forget you can't act—forget about acting. Let's get acquainted with this girl in the play. Let's find out all about her."

Unfortunately there wasn't much in the script. *Black Boy* was not a good play. The parts were thin—many of the lines artificial. Miss Mitchell said nothing of this to Fredi, however. She knew that even bad plays sometimes come alive with

good acting. And she wanted this eager young girl to have her chance. Everybody was satisfied with Fredi's reading the next day. Rehearsals got underway at the Comedy Theater on Thirty-ninth Street.

Black Boy opened in Stamford, Connecticut, September 17, before a noteworthy gathering of frost-hardy summer folk and the theater frequenters of Maine and the Cape. Paul Robeson in boxing trunks sparring in a ring, Paul Robeson making love, Paul Robeson singing, Paul Robeson in tattered overalls, a wide grin on his face, playing a harmonica—there wasn't much else to the play, but the audience loved these things.

On that opening night an incident occurred which endeared the star to all the little people backstage. As often happens in theaters built years ago, the dressing rooms were tucked away in corners which utilized space, but were most inconvenient for the workers who had to use them. The one exception was the large dressing room marked with a star—level with the stage. To reach the other rooms it was necessary to climb flights of narrow, winding iron stairs. Robeson arrived at the theater with several other members of the cast. He was immediately directed to the star's dressing room. He was early and as he stood in the doorway chatting with several stagehands he noticed the other members of the cast, dragging suitcases, climbing the winding grilled staircase. One of them laughingly referred to it as "Jacob's ladder." He asked the stagehand about it. The stagehand hunched his shoulders and remarked stoically, "Mista, them dressin' rooms is a chaser! Fine for Peter Pan—he can fly!"

Paul laughed, but he sent for the stage manager. When Light arrived he said, "Jimmy, I want to change dressing rooms."

The stage manager could hardly believe his ears. Paul, of

all people, to turn temperamental—on an opening night! He threw up his hands. This was the *last* straw.

"For the love of—" he began.

"Wait, Jimmy. This is the only dressing room on this floor, isn't it?"

"It *certainly* is—and it's large and got good mirrors. Those other cubbyholes under the roof aren't fit for—"

"That's just it, Jimmy. I want you to give this dressing room to Miss Washington."

"What?" Now—he'd heard everything!

"Stop yelling at your favorite actor, Jimmy. Just send a boy up after Miss Washington's things and I'll hustle up with mine. Good heavens, man, I can climb those stairs all evening better than she can."

So during their stay in Stamford the star cheerfully ran up and down the stairs, often giving some fellow actor a helpful lift. And even the call boy bestirred himself mightily to see to it that such a "good guy" got everything "what's comin' to him"!

Black Boy had only a short run in New York. The *New York Sun,* October 7, 1926, admits that the "lusty epic of a lost prize-ringer is made heartily human by Paul Robeson," but says there is "something fiercely, successfully bad about the writing of *Black Boy*. . . . It saws the air wildly with its motives; its action tramples heavily on all reasonableness. . . . Yet the snort of animal vigor is in its puniest line, and the fascination of a strange, stripped humanity in its most forced moment."

It was rather unfortunate that at the last minute somebody decided Fredi's name, sounding masculine, would not do for the New York program. She therefore became Edith Warren. And so when, according to the papers, she danced "a dazzling Charleston," her triumph was somewhat dimmed. Her little following from the Club Alabam felt cheated.

The show closed but managers on both sides of the Atlantic began considering plays suitable for Paul Robeson. Scarcely a day passed that somebody did not offer some new "plan." Paul had been persuaded to do something about voice training. There were those who vigorously protested against his allowing anybody to "tamper" with his beautiful "natural" voice. They talked of it retaining its "primitive" quality. Others strove to make a case for the absolute difference between the voice of a Negro and that of anybody else. Paul was impressed and he was very careful in the selection of teachers. He did not want his voice changed. He did, however, want to know how best to use and preserve it.

Then he was being asked to return to London for the production *Taboo,* playing opposite the well-known English actress Mrs. Pat Campbell. Paul was torn between the desire to work with such an important star and a reluctance to leave New York just at this time. For Mrs. Paul could not accompany him. The Robesons were planning for an addition to the family, and Paul, who always regarded his wife as "such a little thing," worried about Essie's health. She gaily waved aside all hesitation.

"Run along. I'll be all right."

The young husband was far from reassured. True, Mrs. Goode, Essie's mother, had come up from Washington to be with her daughter, and their excited and mysterious whisperings sometimes shut Paul out. But he nevertheless felt that he wanted to be around. There was, however, to be considered the financial advantages of another London appearance. And Paul was beginning to realize that he *must* think about money. Everything he was doing, the mode of living which was forced upon them, took a great deal of money. And he was not by any means in the "big money" earning class. Essie was a most efficient business manager. "Tight," Paul sometimes ruefully labeled her. But Paul had no thought of money at all. In the

past he had hardly known whether they did or did not have it. Now, he informed himself sternly, things must be different.

He began to figure what the London show might mean. When he did sail for England, Lawrence Brown was with him. They were certain they could give some concerts—on the side. And this would be additional profit.

London was prepared to like *Taboo*. True, its subject matter was somewhat weird and totally unfamiliar—dealing with Negro folkways in general and voodoo worship in particular. But Mrs. Pat Campbell was an old favorite and London was glad to have another opportunity to see Paul Robeson.

Shortly before the opening Paul received news which weighted his heart with grief. His elder brother, Bill, who for some time had been practicing medicine in Washington, had been stricken in the midst of his work. Before they realized that he was seriously ill he died. Ben, the second brother, was pastoring a church in California. He was then on his way east. Marian, their sister, who was teaching in Philadelphia, had been with Bill when he died. They knew that Paul could not come and they assured him everything would be taken care of. He cabled immediately. Though he was so far away his aching heart was with them. He was back there in the parsonage at Somerville with Bill and Marian and Dad. And Ben coming up from his little church in Bayonne—all of them together planning the future. Then they had all gone separate ways—no time for long discussions, no time for long walks, no gathering around a big table. They had scarcely seen each other during the recent years.

Where was that shining future they had planned? What had he, Paul, contributed to that future? He asked himself the question bitterly, reproachfully. It seemed to him that he had wasted so much time. He had chosen no clear course—he had merely taken things as they came. Now—Bill was dead.

Deep roots of thought began to swell: Half-remembered

words of his father's; Bill's face, reflecting hurts he could not speak about. Proud black men—whose pride becomes their own undoing! And behind them Africa, looming in the past, but surely casting long shadows over all their future. What future could any black man have until those shadows were dispelled? His father had talked of the unknown history and cultures of Africa. Paul began to think about all these things. He became critical of himself. For a long time he had been asking himself questions. Now he must find the answers—for himself.

The stature of the man was taking shape.

One evening Paul, on a busy corner waiting to cross the street, found himself wishing a traffic light might blink out there in the dimness. It would have been a little like home and he was homesick. As he stood watching the white-gloved bobby directing traffic, turning from side to side like a New England weather vane, he heard music. It was coming from a dark, massive pile looming out of the fog behind him.

"One of the famous old churches," Paul thought and decided to go inside.

As he climbed the steps he almost brushed against another man coming from the other side. He followed this man through the wide portals and, dropping into a pew beside him, bowed his head. The singing rose and swelled into a mighty cadence, engulfing his soul in music. Then gradually it ebbed into the distance like tiny waves breaking themselves upon white sands. A single male voice—Paul thought he had never heard such a beautiful voice. His eyes remained closed for several moments. Something was registering in his mind—something which had not yet reached his consciousness. Then he knew. He opened his eyes and looked about him. Never before had he been inside a Jewish synagogue, but as he saw the old men with long white beards, black skullcaps upon their heads—as he discerned the strong features and aquiline noses—he knew. He wondered if

he should leave—if he were violating any canon. It was so peaceful here. He did not want to go. At that moment he felt a touch on his arm. The man next to him was extending a small bound book, with his finger indicating the place. He smiled and took the book. Then all around him a chant arose and he, though not understanding the words of the prayer, knew he was included. He remained until the end of the service. Then he rose and with the others passed under the wide arch. One moment they were all going down the steps together, then they went their separate ways, disappearing in the fog. Paul slept that night and woke refreshed.

Paul was reaching out—seeking new contacts. Having learned that there were a number of Africans in London, he looked them up and found them intelligent and serious—most of them students. From them he learned of other Africans in various European universities—and that the largest number was in Paris.

"A black man moves more freely in Paris than in London," he was told.

So at the first opportunity he and Larry crossed the Channel and he met black Frenchmen who in turn introduced him to French colonials. But even in the midst of his questions, Paul was conscious of Paris—Champs-Élysées to the Bois-de-Boulogne, Montmartre and La Çigale, bookstalls along the Quai Voltaire, chocolate and croissants, Arabs squatting on the streets selling rugs and perfumes, dinner at the Café d'Harcourt.

He was seeing Paris in the fall when the Luxembourg gardens were riotous with the vivid colors of tulips in bloom, when Parisians, after the first light rains and hint of chill, basked in the overtones of lingering sunshine. Paris in the spring is an eager young girl, poised and questioning, with upturned head and flushed cheek; but Paris in the fall is a woman, warm with love, with flecks of gold deep in the purpled shadows of her eyes

and an alluring smile upon her lips. Even though she sometimes be neither wise nor kind, all men love Paris.

They ran into old friends and made new ones. One afternoon at the Café de la Paix they were spied by Fredi Washington, who, with Al Moore, was dancing at Chantilly. In a few minutes Paul and Larry were surrounded. In spite of Paul's evident embarrassment, Fredi was telling the story of the dressing rooms in Stamford. So this anecdote was added to the Paul Robeson lore now growing on two sides of the Atlantic.

Then came the cablegram announcing the birth of his son! The young father could hardly contain himself. The usual celebrations took place with Paul lavishly buying champagne! When *Taboo* closed he took the first boat home to make the acquaintance of Paul, Junior, who had been born November 2, 1927.

The Fourth Movement

ALLEGRO CON BRIO

15

ROLLING UP THE HIGHWAY

WITH THE LONDON PRODUCTION of *Show Boat* in the spring of 1928, Paul Robeson, the artist, stepped out upon firm, sure ground. The producers had at first hesitated about offering him the insignificant role of Joe in the play. It was too small a part to offer such an actor. But Jerome Kern wanted Robeson. Paul Robeson took the part and "Ol' Man River" began "rollin' along," lifting the singer on its crest and finding new channels for its course.

London audiences loved *Show Boat*. Here was something they could understand; here was romance and color filtered through the delightful lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein II and the tuneful music of Jerome Kern. Here was a cast including Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Edith Day, Marie Burke, Dorothy Lena—well-known favorites all—and here was "that American Negro, Paul Robeson," of whom all London was talking. He was a symbol of a new idea, a new interest, almost a new "movement." For the centers of the world were just beginning to "discover" the American Negro. Though legalized slavery had been stamped out, the concept and philosophy which had made possible the monstrous trafficking in dark-skinned human beings persisted in the Western world. True, the "slave concept" was not wholly to disappear for many years, but it was now being questioned and new angles were being presented for consideration. William C. Handy's "Blues" were being translated into poetry by Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, Carl Van Vechten dis-

turbed the waters with his bizarre and kaleidoscopic picture of a seething Harlem, W. E. B. Du Bois upset calculations with his cold, precise reasoning, Vachel Lindsay wrote *Congo* and African sculpture was creating a new fad in Paris.

Against this background now loomed the gigantic figure of Paul Robeson with his magnificent voice, powerful body and warm smile. He stirred the imagination. Behind his dark face he remained a mystery. His eyes were veiled.

The *London Daily Express,* July 5, 1928, contains an article by James Douglas entitled "A Negro Genius in London." After discussing Robeson, the artist, the writer continues:

"He is more than a great actor and a great singer. He is a great man, who creates the soul of a people in bondage and shows you its true kinship with the fettered soul of man. We became like little children as we surrendered to his magical genius. . . .

"What is the secret of his mastery of all our highest moods and all our holiest emotions? . . . There were seconds when his face was alight and aflame with seership. We saw the rapt mysticism gathering in intensity until it reached the height of the mood and then it slowly faded like a sunset, and he locked the door on it with a tightened, tense mouth. . . .

"Strange that a Negro singer out of *Show Boat* should be able to fill a vast theatre with a divine witchery of Bunyan and Wesley, and reveal to astonished worldlings the world beyond their world."

Strange, indeed. *Show Boat* played at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane each night, with Wednesday and Saturday matinées. It was on Sunday evenings that Paul Robeson appeared at the same theater to sing Negro Spirituals. The concerts were not pretentious. Both he and Lawrence Brown, at the piano, wore plain, dark suits. There was no fanfare of publicity—merely a two-line announcement on the Theatre Royal program.

Hearing him, F. C. Coppicus, American concert impresario, who managed tours for Caruso, Chaliapin, Jeritza, Rosa Ponselle and other stars, signed Robeson on a long-term contract. Bookings for Robeson, however, had to be held off until *Show Boat* closed.

Meanwhile, the Robesons had taken a large house in Hampstead, a suburb of London. To the delight and comfort of their friends, Americans *and* English, they installed central heating. The house overlooked the famous Heath and the largest room on the top floor, facing the Heath, was converted into a nursery. Here, with a nurse and under the supervising eye of an adoring grandmother, reigned Paul, Junior. Pauli, as he was called, was a fine, big, good-natured baby. He was never sick and always blissfully concerned with his own affairs. He had come into a beautiful world—a world of sunshine and warmth and plenty, a world in which he had nothing to do but stretch his legs and grow. Life was one big mug of warm milk after another! At least so Pauli would have declared that summer.

Some complications did develop later. No sooner had the show downtown closed than his wonderful daddy—who could toss a fellow high in the air and make the grandest noises—and his pretty, sweet-smelling mamma, dashed off to some far-off place called New York. True, they left him in sole charge of the big house and Grandma was right there to see that there was not the slightest change in his "routine." Life *could* be worse.

In New York, Paul Robeson was once more breaking records. Within five days he sang two sold-out recitals in Carnegie Hall. For these concerts he somewhat modified his all-Negro-music program. He sang a number by Beethoven and two by Mozart in German, Purcell's "Passing By" and Schumann's "Two Grenadiers," both in English. There were differing opinions regarding these additions. Some listeners were vehement in urging him to stick to his interpretation of Negro

music and Negro music only. Others congratulated him warmly for expanding his program, for not limiting himself to Negro music. All conceded that his German was good. Aside from the Spirituals, however, Avery Robinson's "Water Boy" continued to be everybody's favorite.

Paul listened to these things. It was evident that he was thinking deeply. Just what he was thinking he did not express.

For soon they were to be on the road headed for a tour of central Europe. All the great capitals of Europe were to hear Paul Robeson. It was as if he rode in a shining carriage of state with flying plumes and behind fine horses while all along the way the crowds cheered.

What of the man? Behind his shaded eyes he was observing, evaluating and pondering. Occasionally he snatched a few moments for his very own; occasionally he read far into the night or early in the morning before anyone else was stirring; occasionally he slipped away with some queer person, who appeared as if from another world, to give him some scrap of wisdom for which he had been searching. He carried several schoolbooks in his trunks—books from the London School of Oriental Languages. He was trying to discover the likenesses and differences between Swahili and Bantu, ancient languages of Africa, and some of the languages of Russia and China. He was learning many things. Sometimes he was staggered by the mountains of ignorance he would be forced to dispell. Sometimes he grew discouraged and weary. But, "Ol' Man River kept right on rollin' along."

Paul managed to spend some time with his sister and brother Ben before leaving the States. Reverend Benjamin Robeson came East with his wife for the visit. They were all so proud of their "little brother," as they persisted in calling Paul, that his heart was somewhat lightened. He tried to pack all the crowded years into those few days for them, urging them to visit him in London. His sister thought she might manage the trip the

following summer. They saw that Paul was the same warm-hearted brother.

Both he and his wife cherished old friends. They were sometimes hurt because of these friends' apparent reluctance to meet them on a common ground. But friends of former days are usually shy with celebrities.

Mrs. Paul's girlhood friend, Minnie Sumner, then Mrs. William Patterson, was not in New York when they arrived. But one morning the phone rang. It was she.

"Minnie! Darling! Where are you? Come on over, right away!"

"Essie, my dear, I just—"

"But Minnie! I've got to have some clothes!" It was a cry which no such dressmaker as Minnie Sumner could resist.

An hour later the two friends were together—Mrs. Patterson wide-eyed with admiration. One of the first things she had said was, "Essie, you're growing prettier every month."

"Oh—Minnie—" But Essie's eyes were shining and her face was radiant. "I'm sure my two Pauls would like that," she finally managed.

"Motherhood agrees with you, and Paul's success also agrees with you. You were destined to be the great lady."

Essie laughed, but then she said definitely, "Enough of this nonsense. Now—I've got to have some clothes. I know you haven't got time, but—" She waved aside her friend's unspoken protest.

"Essie, you can order clothes from any shop in New York, Paris or London! What in the world are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about *you* making me some wonderful new clothes"—each word was emphasized with her finger—"as only you can make." And her smile was winsome.

"But—Essie—"

"I'll tell you exactly the sort of occasions I expect to attend —and we'll plan each piece," Essie continued, her eyes growing

dreamy in anticipation. "We'll buy the loveliest materials, you shall cut all the designs—and—oh, Minnie, think of it—we can buy *all the material we want*!"

They looked at each other in ecstasy before Minnie collapsed weakly with laughter.

"Oh! Oh—you idiot!" And then she hugged her friend.

They bought materials and Mrs. Patterson started the dresses. One afternoon Paul unexpectedly wandered into the room. His wife was standing on a stool near the window. She seemed to be emerging from a shimmering mass of softly harmonious colors, reflecting the burnished gold of her arms and bosom as she turned in the enveloping mist. At her feet crouched Minnie, her mouth full of pins, her eyes intent, her forehead puckered. Paul stared. Then he said generously, "Um—um—That's going to be a real pretty dress."

Essie giggled. But Minnie looked up coolly. She removed the pins from her mouth and announced, "This, my renowned friend, is not a *dress*. It's a creation!"

They sailed for England the second week in December—gaily chatting about the mild English winters, but laughing to themselves as they remembered that first fall in London. Now the thought of chill no longer alarmed them. They were going to a well-heated home—their own.

Little Pauli had gained many pounds; Mrs. Goode was well and in the best of spirits, bubbling over with enthusiasm for the coming tour. In a short time their itinerary was set and Essie had efficiently cleared everything regarding passports and tickets.

At last came the morning the three, the Robesons and Lawrence Brown, waved good-bye to reporters, photographers and friends gathered on the platform of Victoria Station to see them off. They knew a December Channel crossing would be rough, but they were all good sailors and did not mind it. Nor did the customs at Calais hold them up. American Negroes usually

passed through French customs offices with the minimum of delay. This might have something to do with the fact that French officials have been heard to remark that American Negroes have such good manners!

They were among the first to board the boat train, but their compartment was soon filled up. These compartments—first and second class differing only as to doilies and color of seats—offer only the illusion of privacy. A passenger traveling in our open cars is not forced to study the back of the neck of the passenger sitting in front of him. Even if one must share a seat he may bury himself in a book or look out the window. But in European compartments passengers face each other, knees inevitably knock. After a time the stony unawareness considered good manners becomes most trying.

No sooner had the train started than an English gentleman, greatcoat and muffler wrapped about him, dropped the window with a clatter and leaned back inhaling large gobs of cold, damp air. Paul shivered.

"Let's go to lunch," Larry suggested.

They stumbled back to the restaurant car, which was fairly full. As they studied the card Paul sighed and made a comment.

"In a restaurant, hotel, café—I can take it. But a dining car devoid of even one solicitous, beaming *brown* face fails to arouse my appetite. I'm not hungry."

"Neither am I," agreed Larry.

Mrs. Robeson laughed and ordered lunch for the three of them. Morosely the two artists ate their salad.

Then they were getting into Paris, past the factories, past workmen's tenements with washing hung on strings across the windows. Suddenly, there was the Sacré-Cœur, white on the hills of Montmartre.

They were in Paris!

They put up at a modest hotel behind the Madeleine. Paul was to appear here for the first time with an orchestra. He was

a little anxious regarding rehearsals and he and Larry went off immediately. They returned in time for a late dinner after which they walked across the Place de la Concorde. Paris was illuminated for the Christmas season. Paris—between two wars—flooding its statues with light! They stood looking into the Tuileries gardens and down the vista towards the Petit Carousel. When they walked across the bridge leading to the Chamber of Deputies they could see Notre-Dame with its tall towers, gargoyles, spires and pinnacles clear-cut against a velvet sky. It was a thing of matchless beauty.

They leaned against the bridge, looking up. Paul's deep voice broke the silence:

"John Ruskin says something about the question to raise regarding all such art. He says we should ask: 'Was it done with enjoyment? Was the carver happy while he was about it'?"

"I think he probably was. The workmen who carved the ornaments of Notre-Dame were lifting prayers—prayers to God." Essie spoke softly. Larry's voice added, and there was a hard note, "And so it didn't matter if his pay was only a few cents a day—or if perhaps he was flogged to his task."

"And what were they praying for?" asked Paul.

"I suppose—for happiness—for release from want and pain."

There was a long silence and then Paul's murmur:

"A thousand years—almost a thousand years!"

Paul Robeson was given an ovation after his Paris concert. The orchestral arrangements by Ralph Lawton wove magic around his rich voice. His numbers were all Negro Spirituals, but as he sang "My Lord, What a Morning" he was seeing the white spires of Notre-Dame lifting themselves mutely toward the heavens—stretching upward against a black sky—waiting for a morning not yet come.

He sang encores far into the night.

It is an all-day trip from Paris to Cologne. They choose this rather than the night train because they wanted to see everything possible.

"*Particularly*—I want my eyes open when I enter Germany." Paul was quite emphatic.

"Invasion from Harlem!" They were in the best of spirits that morning as they approached the German border. Soon they fell silent, lost in contemplation.

They were in Germany, approaching the Rhine. Paul was going to sing at Düsseldorf, famous for its music festivals, birthplace of Heinrich Heine. Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms had directed music at Düsseldorf.

"Now," thought Paul and his pulse quickened, "*I* am giving a concert at Düsseldorf."

Would the people accept him? Would his music communicate its beauty to them? He began thinking about these people. What had the war meant to them? What of all the strange disquieting rumors coming out of Germany? Were they just rumors? He was to ask these and many more questions a few months later when he reached Berlin. But that day as he looked out of the train window he saw nothing alarming. The air was cold and clear, great piles of snow lay in drifts in every crevice, but black hills lifted themselves majestically. Mines were pointed out to them, steel mills and factories around which clustered communities of model houses built for the workers. Surely, he thought, Germany is recovering from the strain of the war. And Paul Robeson was glad.

This was the winter of 1930. Adolph Hitler was frequently mentioned, but no one—outside of Germany—took him seriously. Hitler had written a book called *Mein Kampf* while in jail, following his conviction for participation in the *Putsch* of 1923. Englishmen laughed at the book. *Some* Americans did not laugh at it. Since he had been released he had been barred

from public speaking. The day when Hitler would be made Chancellor of the Reich was still three years away.

"Paul! Paul! Look!" Essie was shaking his arm. He followed her eyes and saw, lifting itself in the setting sun, the Cathedral of Cologne.

There was nothing else. The train came to a stop within its shadow. It was as if the city hovered around the Cathedral—afraid. They came out onto the Domplatz and found themselves in the midst of grinding, shrieking, deafening noises. Taxis, squawking worse than those in Paris, venders selling eau-de-Cologne, buses, wagons. Then they saw that a steamer in the river below was debarking passengers and freight almost under the buttresses of the Cathedral's apse.

"Gracious!" Essie put her hands to her ears. They were to spend the night here and motor to Düsseldorf the next day. This was the plan. Now they began to wonder if they couldn't get to Düsseldorf that evening.

"We can't, of course," Paul said. "The Herr Direktor is coming for us. What *is* his name?"

"I've got it in my notebook. But that's not important now. We might as well get to the hotel."

The next morning the music director from Düsseldorf arrived in a closed car. Along the right bank of the Rhine River they drove to the lovely old city. They entered it through modern environs where they drove through wide streets by mills and manufacturing plants.

"Cotton, leather, tobacco and chemicals," explained their guide. His English was very good. Essie tentatively tried out her German and was delighted with the results. They chatted together all the way. Larry, in very good German, asked an occasional question. He had been here before, but several years ago. Paul sat silent. It was enough to listen and look. Then the streets became narrower with frequent turns, the architecture was medieval and soon they were looking up at a castle which

had been built two hundred years ago. They turned into a little square filled with people. Here the car stopped and as Paul Robeson stepped out the people cheered. He was being officially welcomed to Düsseldorf.

He sang that night in a great hall, part of which was standing when Mendelssohn was there. Then it had held only the Princes, Dukes, Electors, their ladies and their guests. But on that January night shopkeepers and millworkers rubbed elbows with merchants and students. An old man with a long beard wept silently, tears running down his cheeks, while Paul sang "Go Down, Moses." Afterwards he kissed the hand of the singer and blessed him.

On to Dresden, capital of Saxony, through which runs the Elbe River.

"The city itself like a piece of Dresden china!"

Essie, standing at the hotel window, was looking out through a flurry of white flakes at the imposing churches, domed buildings and garden circles now covered with snow which hung in glistening festoons from the carved ornaments.

That night the singers from the Dresden Opera House attended Robeson's concert. Afterwards they crowded around him.

At Prague he sang in the famous Smetana Hall. Immediately upon his arrival in the Czechoslovakian capital he was handed an envelope heavily engraved and bearing the seal of the United States Embassy. It contained an invitation to a reception being planned in his honor after the concert.

The American Ambassador and entire diplomatic corps attended the concert. The orchestra played the "Star-Spangled Banner" when His Excellency the Ambassador entered.

It was a glittering gathering representing the "cream" of Central Europe—princesses, diplomats, lords and ladies, nobility—which assembled at the Embassy that night to meet a

man who had come from far across the sea, whose music had stirred the dried roots of their hearts and for a time had dispelled the clouds gathering about their royal heads.

"Mr. and Mrs. Paul Robeson." The company turned and lorgnettes were raised to watch them descending the wide, sweeping stairway. They made a striking picture. He so tall and big and straight, all black and white, and she beside him, holding her glistening head proudly, a golden prism reflecting all the light and color of the hall and moving in its glow. This was Essie's moment and she made the most of it.

Her gown created quite a furore. Even princesses, some of them no longer young, are stirred by the sight of a beautiful gown correctly worn. And that night there was much whispering about the gown worn by Madame Robeson.

"Where did she get it?"

"Paris—of course."

"It is divine!"

"I have never seen anything so exquisite!"

Finally the whisperings reached the lady and she was most gracious. "Madame" Robeson corrected one impression. No, the gown did not come from Paris. It was an *American* creation, designed by a modiste in New York City. She told them her name—just in case they might be in New York—sometime.

"Madame Minnie Sumner," they repeated the name. Only they made it sound very French!

Hours later, as the official car of His Excellency the Ambassador, a magnificent Rolls-Royce, bore the Robesons and Lawrence Brown back to their hotel, Paul leaned back against the richly upholstered seat and chuckled softly.

"What is it, dear?" Essie was in that blissful state of dreamy drowsiness.

"I was just thinking." And Paul chuckled again deep in his throat. Then he added slowly, "It's funny—it's mighty—funny!"

They didn't ask him what was funny. They knew.

It was cold in Warsaw that winter. Not as cold as another terrible winter was to be when Warsaw would be consumed like a torch to light the world. But in that January of 1930 Paul saw contrasts of want and plenty which tore his heart. In Cernauti or Czernowitz, frequently mentioned in World War I because it passed many times from one army to another, the world with which they were familiar fell away. Here they had a taste of the Russian winter with its deep snow, biting cold and heaviness. They rode in sleighs behind beautiful horses to the sound of jingling bells. Turks, and Slavs, Armenians and Magyars, in richly embroidered robes, came to hear Paul Robeson sing.

In Roumania Robeson was summoned to the royal palace to sing for Queen Marie and the young King Michael. The Queen, accompanied by her daughter-in-law, the Greek Princess Helen (renounced by King Carol), and the Queen of Jugoslavia attended the concert at Bucharest.

They followed the Danube River to the capital of Hungary—a tapestry of hills and water, of music, leisure, elegance—and of slums and misery. The right bank of the Danube, rising in hilly terraces, is Buda, a city of history, crowned by the Coronation Church. On the opposite bank is Pest, stretching into the plains, with modern improvements and wide streets. The two sections are connected by half a dozen graceful bridges spanning the Danube.

In Budapest, Robeson sang "Deep River," thinking of the Danube River. He thought of the many lands through which it passed, of the centuries it had been flowing—a great open, natural highway for all Europe . . . a beautiful highway which might have served all people. And all the people might have come to know each other as they went freely up and down the Danube. Only a dream, but a dream which could come true!

From Vienna they went down into Italy for a concert at Turin or Turino, a manufacturing center on the Po River.

"We didn't go over the Alps—we went *through* them."

The railroad tunneling in this region is a marvel of modern engineering. They would have liked to have gone farther south into Italy, but Robeson was scheduled to give the final concert of this tour in Albert Hall, London. So they sped back to England, which was now "home" to them, and two thousand Englishmen packed Albert Hall to hear this man who was no longer a stranger within their midst, but was now "our Robeson."

A pleasant interlude followed in which work was combined with recreation. Kenneth Macpherson persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Robeson to accompany him to Lake Geneva, Switzerland, to make an experimental film. It was a winter holiday spent on the edge of Lake Leman, sheltered by towering white mountains. Here and there on a high peak was a little old castle. In the valley were Swiss farmsteads, pushing up through the snow, sending up spirals of smoke, at night sending out a tiny glow of warm light.

Paul had more time here to mingle with the people, to sit in the café and inn and listen to them talk. He read French and German newspapers and learned how to yodel across the wide open spaces. He welcomed the deep silences of the night.

In March, Paul Robeson was in Berlin for a Max Reinhardt production of *The Emperor Jones*. It was directed by James Light. The papers said this was the first time an American play, directed by an American and given in the English language by an American actor, had been presented on a Berlin stage. *The Emperor Jones* was produced at the Deutsches Theatre in settings a little more modernistic than the originals in New York. Though the dialect must have been difficult for most of the people in the audience, no synopsis was included in

the program. Robeson's graphic acting told the story so vividly that the audience was swept to its feet with enthusiasm. Berlin acclaimed Robeson as loudly as had New York and London, Warsaw and Vienna.

On his way back to London he stopped in Ireland for concerts in Dublin and Belfast.

Then he settled down at Hampstead for a period of undisturbed preparation. At long last he was going to play *Othello.*

No announcement of the modern theater has ever caused such excitement. Columnists, Shakespearean scholars, theatergoers whipped themselves into a frenzy. Articles were written and widely circulated on both sides of the Atlantic declaring that such a thing was an outrage—a Negro could not play the part of Othello; such a thing would violate every Shakespearean concept; such an idea shamed the English stage—no Negro could possibly read with understanding the lines of the immortal bard. Other articles declared just as vehemently that a Negro playing Othello was the most natural thing in the world, that Moors were Africans, that the tragedy of the play starts with the father's unwillingness to accept Othello as his son-in-law, and, these supporters added triumphantly, an American Negro *had* played *Othello*—had starred in it with an English company in the leading capitals of Europe.

This last was stage history. Though Ira Aldrich, a native of Maryland, never played in his native land, this "African Roscius" of the middle nineteenth century did appear all over Europe, and with great success, not only as Othello, but also as Shylock and King Lear.

No argument stopped the controversy, however. Robeson said nothing. He quietly and earnestly went about his work. The daughter of Ira Aldrich, living in London, offered her assistance. He gladly welcomed her suggestions. Together they

went over prints showing costumes worn by this other Othello; they discussed various interpretations. Robeson's Othello would be his own, but he listened to and pondered over every constructive idea.

Nor were the other members of the cast spared. Miss Peggy Ashcroft, lovely English actress who was to play Desdemona, made a statement to the press in which she said, "Racial prejudices are foolish at the best of times, but I think it is positively absurd that they should ever come into consideration where acting is concerned." *

Produced by Maurice Browne at the Savoy Theatre, *Othello* opened on May 19. That night Paul Robeson had his say. Next morning the *London Morning Post* said in part:

"A noble performance welcomed with tumultuous enthusiasm. No need to apologise for Mr. Robeson because he is a Negro. Though in conventional grace and some niceties of diction we have had English Othellos from whom he might learn, there has been no Othello on our stage, certainly for forty years, to compare with his in dignity, simplicity and true passion. . . . Sybil Thorndike was splendid as Emilia. . . . Maurice Browne's Iago was subtle in idea, but disappointing in character."

The society column of the same paper told of Mrs. Paul Robeson, "wife of the Moor in the play. She sat in the third row of the stalls and wore a white evening dress. . . . Lady Ravensdale brought friends to introduce to her during the first interval, looking handsome in her favorite red with topaz earrings almost three inches square. In the foyer Lady Violet Benham Carter, wearing a very long black frock with transparent hem of flesh-pink tulle, was discussing the lovely dresses worn by Desdemona. . . . Lady Diana Cooper and her husband . . . Ethel Mannin, Anna May Wong, Yvonne Arnaud . . ."

* Reported in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 14, 1930, from the *London Daily Sketch*.

The list continued, telling what the beauties of London wore that night.

The *New York Times* reported how "at the end of the play a steady thunder of applause forced him (Robeson) to descend from where he stood between Sybil Thorndike, who played Emilia, and Peggy Ashcroft, to say a few words of thanks. . . . This has been, in fact, a Robeson day in London."

Paul Robeson did make one statement apart from his performance as Othello. It was a broadcast across the Atlantic, the first Sunday in June, 1930. He was introduced by Cesar Searchinger, London representative of the Columbia Broadcasting System, who said that Robeson's was "the most charming masculine voice in the world today." Mr. Robeson thanked his hearers for their reception of his Othello. He said:

"In Shakespeare's time, I feel, there was no great distinction between the Moor and the brown or black. Surely most of the Moors have Ethiopian blood and came from Africa, and to Shakespeare's mind he was called a blackamoor. Further than that, in Shakespeare's own time and throughout the Restoration, notably by Garrick, the part was played by a black man. This was not changed until the time of Edmund Kean, about the middle of the nineteenth century, when he became brown. I feel that had to do with the fact that at that time Africa was the slave center of the world and people wanted to forget the ancient glory of the Ethiopians."

Thousands of people heard Paul Robeson's voice that day. It was picked up in Paris, and all up and down the Boulevard Saint Michel dark-skinned Americans preened themselves, strutted and basked in the sunshine of his fame. All through that Sunday afternoon they sipped their café au lait and beamed—drunk with their own delight. Everybody came to Paris that summer—Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, Lloyd and Edna Thomas, and young Adam Powell.

"Another boatload," grumbled Eric Walrond, superior in his contract with Boni and Liveright, "and Saint Michel might be mistaken for Seventh Avenue." Eric could write!

Then one morning Paul Robeson's sister was discovered in their midst! Banners were hung out. She was quiet and pleasantly serious, intent on perfecting her French. Everybody wanted to show her Paris. She was *his sister*.

They boasted about how well they knew Paul Robeson.

"Man, I says to Paul—"

"Paul and me, we—"

"Paul Robeson? Why, boy, since I was knee-high to a——"

"We went to school together!"

"We played football together!"

"Say—we *worked* together. At Narragansett Pier we—"

That last topped it! Paul Robeson was one of them—he'd come the hard way. They wove their tales—some of them, no doubt, true. Nobody checked, because nobody really cared. It added up to one thing—their pride in Paul Robeson! Everybody talked—everybody except one tongue-tied, wistful student.

"Still wet behind the ears." Thus Eric Walrond had introduced her to the gang. But then Eric Walrond was handsome as a Greek god done in ebony, while this student was decidedly on the mousy side. However, as she listened to all this talk about Paul Robeson, she was thinking. One day she announced in a small voice, "I'm going to London to see *Othello*."

"You?" Eric was incredulous.

"The papers said—it—it might close—then I—might never see—Paul Robeson." She was stammering in her eagerness.

"How can you leave your phonetics and harmonies and whatever else you're putting your eyes out with?"

"I'm going"—the tone was stubborn—"and," she added with a final flourish of bravado, "I'm going to fly!" Talk about worms turning.

So Eric Walrond, who really *did* know Paul Robeson, gave her a letter addressed to the great man.

"D'you suppose he'll read it?" That seemed expecting a great deal.

"Just see that he gets it. That's all *you* have to do." Eric was very certain.

So early one morning Eric rode with her to the flying field.

"Say—do your folks know you're flying?"

Her folks at that moment being on the west coast of Africa made that possibility unlikely. She shook her head.

"Well, for Pete's sake, don't fall out of the plane!"

This not being her story, we shall not fill up space telling how the plane rose over Paris, with the Eiffel Tower looking like a toothpick sticking in the ground, or how fields of poppies in bloom were like garnets set in emerald, or of a Channel filled with toy ships and the landing at Croyden where a rumbling bus picked up passengers and conveyed them along a road between neat, brick houses set in regular plots. Maybe it was a dream, anyhow. But one thing must be told.

For this happened to be the July morning in 1930 when, after years of repairing, St. Paul's Cathedral was being formally opened. Pall Mall was lined with throngs of people. The King and Queen were to drive by in a moment on their way to St. Paul's. This was the information her breathless questions elicited. And so, with the assistance of a most obliging bobby, she climbed to a high place and then she saw them coming—two carriages with plumes, driven by white horses. And all the people cheered—and she cheered, too, as they drove by—the King and Queen of England, Edward, Prince of Wales, and his younger brother George, the Duke of York. She would have fallen off her perch had not the bobby held her. She might, indeed, have fallen down had she realized on that morning in 1930 that she was in fact looking at *three* Kings of England, Rulers of the Realm and Emperors of India!

It was a wonderful beginning for what promised to be a perfect day—not a cloud in the sky, not a hint of fog in the air. She learned that she was in the vicinity of the Savoy Theatre and decided to go there at once. Someone might be able to direct her to Paul Robeson.

It was not yet noon so she went around to the stage entrance. Being wise as to the uncertainties of doormen, she approached this one with a smile. He sat on a stool, spreading out over it, and his face resembled nothing so much as a large, red apple. But he eyed her without expression.

"I have a letter for Mr. Paul Robeson." This seemed the best thing to say.

"You 'ave?" He spoke with a strong cockney accent.

"Yes. I flew over from Paris—this morning. I came to see *Othello.*"

"You did?" He was interested and visibly thawing.

"I just saw the King and Queen."

At this last the doorman's face broke into wreaths of welcome. He grew voluble. He beamed upon her. Finally she gathered that he was telling her that Paul Robeson was inside the theater.

"He is here now?" It was unbelievably good luck.

"In a conference. Give me the letter. I'll take it to him."

She stood inside the square entrance waiting, studying the charts and notices hanging on the wall. He came in so softly that he was there before she realized it.

Even after all the columns she had read and all the things she'd heard, she was not prepared for this Paul Robeson. He filled the little room and his smile was like the smiles of all the people she had ever loved—rolled into one. He was a great man—one had only to look at him to know! He held the letter in his hand.

"You came all the way from Paris to see *Othello.*"

He spoke as if she'd done him a favor by coming. He acted

as though she were a very important person! She stammered, flushing with embarrassment. He did not seem to notice.

"Please have a seat. I'll be through with this conference in a few more minutes."

She waited—wishing the doorman would come back. But when the door opened again it was he.

"Now we'll have some lunch. I'm sure you're starved."

She wasn't. She was very happy. They went out on the street and everyone they passed called his name. In the restaurant the waiter said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Robeson," and conducted them to a table for two. It was near a window, a long panel window which came down to the floor. She could see the people passing by.

What they had for lunch? She doesn't know. Maybe it was nightingale tongues or peacock hearts—maybe it was milk and honey. She remembers he asked her about school and music and what she was doing—and about her father who was in Africa. Then they were in a cab. He was writing a note and saying, "The driver will take you out to the house. Give this note to whoever is home—Mrs. Robeson or mother. One of them will be there and look after you. I'll arrange for tonight."

Then he got out and she was rolling through the streets of London. Nothing but brick buildings—everything so compact and neat and clean. She thought they must be in the country when the great field of undulating green came in view.

"It's the Heath," the driver informed her.

Then they stopped in front of a three-story brick house. She remembers the white-stone trimmings.

At her ring the door opened silently. She knew an English butler when she saw one. She tried not to stare and he regarded her with lifted eyebrows.

"Mr. Robeson said—" She extended the note.

In another moment she was being cordially greeted by a

charming little lady who introduced herself as "Mrs. Goode, Mrs. Robeson's mother."

"My *dear,* you must be worn out. You've had lunch? Then come right upstairs and rest. My daughter will be back shortly. This is your first time in London?"

She was leading the way up the stairs where she threw open the door to a wide, spacious bedroom in the center of which stood an enormous bed. She began turning down the covers. Before the student could say "Jack Robin" there she was in some soft, frilly wrap, tucked between the fragrant sheets.

"Now take a nice nap."

Mrs. Goode pulled down the window shades and tiptoed out of the room, closing the door softly behind her.

The house was blissfully still. Only the soft white curtains at the window moved gently. Perhaps she did fall asleep, for it was here that Mrs. Robeson found her.

Letting herself in the side door, she had come running up to her room, opened the door and stopped before the stare of two dark eyes looking up at her from a small, pale face on her pillow. She wrinkled her brow in bewilderment.

"Oh, Essie, is that—?" Her mother was calling. She swallowed.

"Why—yes—it is." After all—

Her silvery laughter filled the room when she understood.

"It's these *unexpected* things!" she explained.

While she slipped off the smartly tailored street dress she was saying that the Carl Van Vechtens had just left for the Continent that morning, taking with them—if memory is correct—their initialed purple sheets and one, or perhaps two, cats. Generally, Mrs. Robeson didn't like cats, but—

"The Van Vechten cats are special—*very* special." Then—"Have you ever seen Carl Van Vechten?"

The girl shook her head.

"Well—he's the most—" Mrs. Robeson stopped. "No—I can't describe him. You'd just have to see him for yourself."

Many years later when the student did see Carl Van Vechten she knew what Mrs. Robeson meant.

"Are you tired?" The girl's eyes were dancing.

"Not a bit," she answered.

"Of course not. Hop into your things." Mrs. Robeson swished open the door to a glistening bathroom. "I'm taking Pauli out on the Heath. Maybe you'd like to go."

Pauli looked up at the visitor solemnly. Not quite three years old, he was a diminutive Paul Robeson. Except that he was lighter in color, he was an exact replica. He stood just as firmly on two sturdy legs, his shoulders had the same width and proportions, the expression on his face was identical. Only he was, perhaps, a little more reserved. Strangers were studied carefully.

The nursery of last year had been fitted up as a gymnasium. It was a room to delight the heart of any child. After Pauli had tested the visitor's general intelligence with his Montessori blocks, he pointed out the large pictures of a child driving a little red cart which repeated itself in the cream-colored cretonne draperies. Then, while she expressed her admiration, he balanced himself on his board and allowed her to manipulate the seesaw with cushioned ends which stood in the great bay window, outside of which hyacinths of different colors were blooming in window boxes. By the time they got out on the Heath they were good friends.

Later, Mrs. Robeson served tea and crumpets in the music room and pointed out stacks of records, saying some of them had come from strange and distant places.

"He's found records wonderfully helpful in learning languages and uses them constantly." Mrs. Robeson talked about

her husband with quiet pride. "He's learned Russian this way. They say his mastery of this very difficult language is most unusual." She laughed. "He says it's very easy for him."

"Is he going to Russia?"

"Oh—yes. We don't know how soon. Things are happening at such a rate. He's studying Chinese, also—and says he's going to China."

Curled up in an armchair close to the window, the student read portions of Mrs. Robeson's own book entitled "Paul Robeson, Negro," which had come out in London that summer. It had received excellent reviews and everybody was reading it.

Another engagement prevented Mrs. Robeson from going to the theater that evening, but after dinner they drove to the city together and after Mrs. Robeson had picked up her ticket from the box office she left the girl at the Savoy. The girl lingered in the lobby listening to the people admiring Jacob Epstein's bust of Paul Robeson, which stood on a pedestal beside the door.

And then the play began. Fourteen years later, after the Theater Guild production of *Othello,* one easily looks back upon the London production as having been merely a rung in the ever-ascending ladder. It was an important milestone in Paul Robeson's way, but far from the goal toward which he aspired.

But on that evening, to this girl, as to many others who crowded into the Savoy, the play was a miracle. It became a tragedy depicting the universal struggle of men who have been cast off, plotted against and finally destroyed merely because in color, size, or shape of mind or body they did not conform to some accepted pattern. The lines were not Shakespeare's, the words not something recited from a dusty page. There before them all Paul Robeson—a black man—was pleading, pleading for those who could not speak, pleading for those far

weaker than himself—pleading for understanding. Through her tears—she heard his voice:

> When you
> Shall these unlucky deeds relate
> Speak of me as I am—nothing attenuate
> Nor set down ought in malice.

She returned next day to Paris and to school. But, high in the clouds, drowning the hum of the motors, she could still hear his voice:

> Speak of me as I am—

Note: The insignificant student is the writer.

16

THE TRUMPETS SOUND

"MISTER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?"

A slap across the face could not have startled Paul more. He'd grown accustomed to the whining tone in London and Paris. He'd heard it in Budapest and Warsaw and Vienna—the tone was the same regardless of language. But now he was home—back in the United States. "I can never stay away too long," he had said. This was Market Street in Philadelphia. Americans didn't have to . . .

"Mister—just a dime."

Paul stared at the man. He was not old. He was not dirty. But the face was the face of a hungry man, lips blue with cold, eyes bloodshot. The knuckles of his hand showed white—the hand that was clasping the thin coat with its upturned collar. Paul looked away, suddenly ashamed. He was ashamed of the thick, wool suit so correctly tailored for him, of the great warm overcoat he wore, of the custom-made shoes. He had noted, sticking from the threadbare sleeve, the cuff of an old army shirt—no doubt the only warm garment the man had on.

A dime? God in Heaven! How could he toss this man a dime?

"I—I—was just going in for lunch," he lied. Then—gaining confidence in his idea—"Wouldn't you like to come along?" And he smiled.

He saw the man's face flush in spite of the cold. His heart contracted with sympathy and he looked around hurriedly.

Some small, quiet place where the man would feel no embarrassment. He was not a tramp. While they ate they could talk. Paul's concert the night before had been the usual thing—people standing. Perhaps he could—this man might have some special training—his face was not dull or heavy—only beaten—and hungry. An eating place across the street caught his eye. It was not pretentious, but had an air proclaiming good food. At this hour it would not be crowded.

"Let's go over there."

Without a word the man fell in beside him. They crossed Market Street. Paul made no effort to make conversation. First he'd get a warming drink inside his guest.

They entered the restaurant. Paul immediately spied a table in a secluded corner. Fine, he was thinking, making his way toward it. Now, just the two of us. We can get acquainted. The man had probably served in France. Paul noticed he walked with a slight limp. Well, he'd start talking about Paris—right off.

Paul was so intent upon his own thoughts that he did not notice the startled looks which had greeted their entrance and followed their course from door to table. The man's face had softened as they pulled back the chairs and sat down. Now a smile twisted his lips as he glanced up at the big, dark man. He was saying to the waiter who had approached without any delay, "Please bring us—" But the waiter's voice cut in brusquely.

"We don't serve n—" a slight pause, "Negroes here!"

The man held his breath. He saw something very strange happen to the black man's face. First the eyes lit up like coals of fire. He looked as if he would reach out his long arms and grab the waiter and break his stringy neck in his two hands. He could easily have done it, too. But then the light went out—completely. It was as if there were a mask where a face had been before. The big man pushed back his chair and stood up.

He towered over the waiter as he took a wallet from his pocket. His voice was without expression when he spoke.

"I do not wish service. This gentleman is having dinner—alone."

And without looking at the man, he laid a bill on the table, picked up his hat and, brushing by the waiter, strode out of the restaurant.

As the door swung to behind him the man at the table was suddenly galvanized into action. He leaped to his feet, overturning his chair as he grabbed his hat, swept up the bill and fairly sprang toward the door. The waiter called out, "Say—I thought you was going to—"

The man turned. He took in all the restaurant with his eyes. He no longer stooped or cringed—nor was there any whine in his voice as he said, "Anything I'd eat here would choke me to death, you — — — — !"

He used words he had learned in the Argonne—names the soldiers had applied to the Boche. They were not nice words.

Then he rushed out into the street. But the tall, dark man had disappeared.

Paul had fled—running as if pursued by a hundred demons. He had been away too long! He had forgotten too many things! It was time to climb down from the carriage and start walking.

He talked with his sister Marian far into the night.

"I don't know, Paul." She shook her head. "There are no jobs. And now the banks— Old people who have scrimped and saved money for years now have nothing. They say they will pay up—in time. But things are getting worse all the time. They say the new President, Roosevelt, is working out some plans for relief—but I don't know."

"Relief? A dole in *America?*" It seemed incredible. It was necessary in England, but England was so small—no land, no crops. But America—with its wealth and resources! He'd seen

the ravages of war in Europe; America had not really been touched by the war.

More concerts—the filming of *The Emperor Jones*—back to England for a production of O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape.*

"Paul Robeson adds still another to his list of London triumphs at the Ambassadors Theatre. Acclaimed in *The Hairy Ape,* appearing for the first time in the role of the stoker Yank . . . need not hope to see the part played better than Mr. Robeson plays it."—*New York Times,* May 12, 1931.

Mister, can you spare a dime?

"Mr. Robeson and Mr. Brown have sung private musicales for His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, at St. James Palace, for His Majesty, the King of Spain, for the Duke and Duchess of York, for Lord Beaverbrook at his magnificent country seat 'Leatherhead,' for Baroness Ravensdale, Sir Philip Sassoon, and many other English nobility."

Mister, can you spare a dime?

"Revival of *Show Boat* with Paul Robeson hailed with delight in New York."

"Audience of nine thousand hears Paul Robeson at Lewisohn Stadium."

Mister—

From London, Robeson said, August 30, 1933, "I will not do anything that I do not understand. . . . But I know the wail of the Hebrew and I feel the plaint of the Russian. I understand both, as I do the philosophy of the Chinese."

Then in December, 1934, Robeson addressed the League of Colored People of London. Afterwards newspapers said that Robeson had repudiated all of western civilization and culture, that he had declared himself as "going native," that he was going to Africa and forget the white man. He had made no such statements. Undoubtedly he struck out sharply—undoubtedly he struck out blindly that afternoon. He was beating his fists against stone walls. He was baffled by questions which

seemed to have no answers. What he said was that the Negro race should redeem its African heritage. He stated that he definitely believed the future of Africa was tied up with that of the peoples of the East. For himself he said, "My individual success does not matter."

Discussions followed and statements were made by African princes then living in London. Many of the speeches saddened Robeson. So much to be done—such crying needs and yet so much futility—such helplessness.

He left the meeting with a heavy heart as he walked beside a Negro worker whom he had just met. Then the man at his side began to talk. His words were different—they were not bitter—they were not hopeless. His voice was charged with vigor. He seemed to be viewing the world from some high place and he could see far across wide rivers and on the other side of high mountains. His words were like a song which Robeson could not remember—yet knew that he had heard—some place, somewhere.

The worker was talking of what the people of Russia were doing—not tomorrow or next year or in some future when they would be "ready." He talked of what was happening in Russia that day—that day in 1934. Paul listened and pondered every word.

Shortly afterwards the Robesons went to spend a week end with their friend the Dean of Canterbury. It was unusually mild for this time of year and after dinner they sat in the garden where they could look up at the great cathedral. The bond between this English churchman and the dark American was very real. It was a bond based on something deeper than respect and high regard—it was a thing of spirit. So the younger man turned to the Dean for guidance. He unburdened his heart and told of many of the things which so long had been troubling him. The Dean watched the setting sun

reflected in the stained-glass windows of his beloved church and said:

"There is nothing more fundamental about Christianity than the one brotherhood of man. Grant that, and the demand for justice, freedom, and abundance of creative life for each individual, together with an ever-widening fellowship, follow as day follows night. Grant that, and an economic order, which not only frustrates science but produces and tolerates wealth beside poverty, creates and perpetuates class distinctions, and fails to provide opportunity for all in the matter of work, leisure, education, or security, stands condemned." He was silent a moment. Then he added:

"All that I hear of the Russian program grips and inspires me. If what we hear is true, it is majestic in range, practical in detail, scientific in form, Christian in spirit. Russia would seem to have embarked on a task never yet attempted by modern or ancient State. It is a plan well worth studying."

Six days later Paul Robeson was in the Soviet Union.

Moscow, "white-walled" Mother City of the Russians, was the oldest city Paul had ever looked upon. He knew the Russian proverb: "Above Moscow lies the Kremlin, above it lie only the stars." There was nothing decrepit, withered or decayed about the Moscow that greeted Paul Robeson that morning. Among those at the station were Sergei Eisenstein, film producer, all ready with plans for a production, and A. P. Tisse, a famous cameraman. When Paul responded to their greetings in Russian, everybody at the station wanted to talk at once. They inquired about his trip, told him how recent were all railroad improvements and hoped that he had been comfortable. With the same solicitude they accompanied him to his hotel and saw that every need was taken care of.

It was midwinter and very cold, but the air was so bright

and clear, the streets so clean, that Paul wanted to set out at once. He wanted to see this ancient city which was so miraculously newborn.

In the days and nights to follow, Paul sometimes rode, but more often walked about, talking with people on tramways, in buses, on street corners and in public buildings. He was, of course, instantly recognized as a stranger, but his warm smile opened doors and when he spoke their tongue he became a friend. He says, "I was rested and buoyed up by the lovely, honest, wondering looks which did not see a Negro. When these people looked at me, they were just happy and interested. There were no double looks, no venom, no superiority." *

And, more than anything else, they wanted to tell him about their wonderful city.

"Have you seen our subway?" They asked the question proudly.

It was then under construction and was going to be "the finest subway in the world, the handsomest, the richest-looking." No ordinary tiles such as were used everywhere else in other countries were going into their subway. Instead there would be slabs of marble to line the walls! Marble was cheaper and easier to get in Russia. They showed him the course of the Volga-Moscow Canal which would provide a powerful water artery and further development of this modern Moscow. New buildings, new avenues and parks, the planting of nearly eight hundred thousand trees and three million bushes.

Robeson talked with representatives of the Commissariat of Public Education, and saw the plans for education in action. It was evident that the Soviet child from its earliest years, in school, in books, in theater, and in reviews of the Union's many national peoples, is encouraged to transcend all barriers of sex, race, language, or color. He is taught to regard every other

* Article in *The New Theatre,* July, 1935.

child as a brother and to desire for each all the good things which he or she enjoys.

One Sunday afternoon he was taken to the Children's Theater to witness a performance.

This theater, built and arranged like an ordinary theater, was devoted entirely to children. They had their own foyer and restaurant, their own actors and actresses who did nothing else but children's plays. Around the walls of the foyer were photographs of their favorite stars.

That Sunday afternoon about fifteen hundred children, ten years of age and upward, filled the auditorium. The announced play was *The Negro Boy and the Monkey.*

The curtain lifted, revealing a forest where black boys and girls fought and quarreled, until one cried out, "Oh, if only we had a leader!" At that a Negro boy in the audience sprang up and, leaping on the stage, cried, "Why not choose as leader a boy who can run best, jump best and sing best?" They had a contest and this boy was their choice.

The play proceeded with full participation by the members of the audience. The Negro boy arrives in Moscow and in the next scene he is in a chocolate factory with other workers. Because of his prowess he becomes a leader in this group also. But the little boy grieves for his beloved pet—a monkey he has left in Africa. And one day, with the other factory workers, he goes to the circus. There are the usual clowns and then come the performing animals, among them the boy's pet—the monkey, now thin, jaded and miserable. The monkey stumbles, and the circus manager cracks his whip savagely.

The Negro boy, with a piercing cry, utters the monkey's name and the creature leaps over the orchestra, runs deftly over the children's heads in the stalls, climbs up the pillar to the dress circle and, amidst tumultuous cheers, monkey and boy are united.

Then a blackout. On the screen we see the ship returning to Africa. The curtain rises for the final act, which is again the African forest. Here the little black children are mourning the loss of their leader. But down the distant glade come boy and monkey, their arms filled with parcels tied up with gay ribbons, a present for every forest child. The boy hands out these presents with the following speech:

"These presents are from the children of Moscow to the children of the dark forest. For the Moscow children wish every child in all the world, be his color white, red, yellow, or black, be his race what it may, and be his language what it may, to enjoy the same full richness of life as Moscow children now enjoy."

Tears filled Paul Robeson's eyes. They rolled down his cheeks and fell upon the fair head of a small child who pressed against his knees. The child looked up and, taking Paul's great hand between his little ones, said, "I'm so glad you've come; you will be happy here with us. Don't go."

The children of Russia! Later, in the summertime, Robeson returned to Russia for the production of a motion picture. He lived on a collective farm some distance from Moscow, in a village of sturdily built houses, wide open commons, meadows and ponds. The village children surrounded him. They had learned a great deal about American Negroes in school and they plied him with questions. They taught him Russian melodies, telling him the stories behind them and correcting his mistakes. And he taught them Negro songs which they never tired of hearing him sing. He talked to them about his little boy. When he left they ran after the truck rumbling along the road and called, "Come back soon, Pavel Vassilich; come back soon. Bring Pavlik with you, and come back soon."

And as he rode away he thought how much his shy, sensitive Pauli would enjoy this warm interest, this sincere friendship.

Paul Robeson did not go to Russia to escape. He had no need to do that. Already, *he* was "on top." He went to Russia to learn. He says:

"I came here because the Soviet Union is the only place where ethnology is seriously considered and applied. Africa does not realize that it has something to contribute, that it has a culture as clear as the European. Africans, instead of preserving their own culture, are fighting the idea of 'be what you are' and go European as soon as they can. . . . The Negro cannot develop his culture until he is free. . . . All the people of this portion of the globe must be proud when Stalin speaks of the cultures of the different nationalities of the Soviet Union as 'socialist in content and national in form.'" *

The scientists of Russia were not only declaring; they were writing into their documents of state, they were weaving into their basic economy that all races are related in culture, that they differ in the degree of their development only so far as they are affected by natural resources or the hindrances of exploitation. He saw a people, occupying one-sixth of all the globe, dragging themselves out of the morass of an enslaving past and building their world on this philosophy. He saw how far they had come; he saw their determination, their eagerness to work and sacrifice, their ability to dream.

He gave no concerts, but one afternoon he sang for the workers of the Kaganovitch Ball Bearing plant. Many of those who gathered in the great recreation hall to hear him were not Russians. He recognized some Americans. They applauded and shouted—gathered around him to shake his hand—guided him through the plant. And each one proudly pointed out some recent improvement, some achievement of "our" plant.

Discussing that first visit in Russia, Robeson said, "All I can say is that the moment I came there I realized that I had found what I had been seeking all my life."

* Article in *The New Theatre,* July, 1935.

The artist and the man had merged. All the instruments were now in tune. No more playing on loose strings—no more blurred notes. There might be mistakes, of course—no part or whole is perfect. And the vast ensemble was only beginning. But now the theme was clear.

17

THE "B" THEME PLAYED ON TIMPANI

TOM-TOMS SOUNDING ALONG the Thames River! Not a retreat into Africa, but rather calling her peoples to come forth in their native garb beating their drums and singing their songs—this was the idea which had caught Paul Robeson's imagination when the plan for playing the lead in Edgar Wallace's *Sanders of the River* was presented to him. He was told how London Films had dispatched Zoltan Korda, brother of the director Alexander Korda, to Central Africa. The unit had been equipped with sound film, the best recording machines, and had spent five months in Uganda, Southern Sudan and the Belgian Congo. Trekking many thousands of miles across deserts, through jungles and over mountains they had taken pictures with recordings of actual native rituals and everyday happenings. These records and films were to form the background for a drama of native life in which Paul Robeson was to play Basambo, a chief.

Robeson was enthusiastic. In his London flat he played over the records, beating out the rhythms, rolling out the cadences.

"I have seen all the African and Balinese films that have been made," he told a visitor. "Never have I come across anything like this. Korda's film has given me proof that the music is magnificent—these fine war songs, wedding songs and river songs. What an opportunity for me to break new ground with my singing!"

He knew no fatigue. He wanted to get the music into his very blood.

"Listen to this bit of syncopation!" he'd exclaim. "The Negro carries the ability to syncopate in his blood. Everything the American Negro has comes from Africa—songs, dances and rhythm. Only," he added with a grin, "the original rhythms are more complicated."

He worked on details—details which might have been left to others. A reproduction of a native village was built at Shepperton. The waterfronts of Cardiff, Glasgow and Liverpool were combed for Africans.

"In the two hundred and fifty or more we rounded up, there were some twenty different dialects. I was astonished, in listening to them, at the closeness of our own racial derivation. One day on the set I overheard one of them speaking his native dialect. To my amazement I was able to understand much of what he said. I spoke to him at once, and do you know he was from the Ebo tribe in Nigeria—the very tribe and country from which my own father's family came. Surely I must have heard a word or two of this language, that had crept into my father's speech and that he himself had inherited." *

From time to time Robeson reported on the set—his scene was shot and he was free to wander about as he wished—listening to some bit of music—talking to the natives and filling up the little notebook in which he jotted down words.

"A phrase I got at once from this African I spoke of was *'aw bong.'* You can say it three different ways to mean as many different things. In fact, it is rather sung than spoken, as are all the dialects. Suddenly its reminiscence occurred to me—*Ol Boy*—the musical phrase of the Spiritual, not its English title, of course. There are many other instances."

But it was with the arrival of Pauli and his grandmother that the entire project became a personal revelation. Pauli was

* *London Evening Standard,* November 4, 1938.

now six years old. For nearly three years Paul had seen very little of him.

The big house in Hampstead had been closed when doctors discovered that the child was suffering from a throat ailment and advised that he be taken at once to a higher altitude. Essie, quietly efficient, had told Paul not to worry. She would manage everything. A few months later the boy was established with his grandmother high up in the Austrian Tyrol. The services of the daughter of a resident physician were secured as governess and Essie returned to London.

The tiny hostel was almost like a private home. Everybody made a great fuss over the "little brown boy," and Ada (the governess) and Pauli were fast friends from the beginning. The girl was endowed with the physique and health of the peasant and the mentality of a scholarly father. She skated, swam, skied and tossed balls for Pauli's edification, gradually drawing the child into the activity. He learned French and German without an effort.

A year of school in Switzerland followed. Then, after a short period in England, Pauli crossed the Atlantic with his grandmother and entered the public schools of Montreal, Canada. That year he also had boxing lessons from a coach at McGill University. By the spring of 1936 the boy seemed to have outgrown all traces of the throat and nose trouble and in April they left for England to rejoin his parents.

Paul and Essie had both gone down to the *Sanders of the River* set and so Pauli and Mrs. Goode went directly to Gerrard Cross, a half-hour's ride from the film center, where the parents were awaiting them.

Pauli was so much larger than they had expected. Every inch of his robust body was vibrant with health; he spoke French, German and English with equal ease. Big Paul looked down upon this "pint-size" replica of himself with a degree of awe! In spite of the busy, crowded months which had so rap-

idly compressed themselves into years, the vision of his son had always been with him. But now the reality of the boy brought a startling awareness.

For at the first sight of the *Sanders* set Pauli's eyes had opened wide—he had jumped up and down with excitement—he had cut short everything else with a shout of happy surprise:

"Look! Look at them! Why, there are lots of black people—lots of people—*just like us*!"

And he had dashed off—eager, curious, asking questions, seizing upon the extras who were lounging in their huts and strolling about the place. And Paul, watching him, suddenly realized that his son knew nothing about Negroes!

The father and mother looked at each other in consternation. Then, characteristically, Essie made one of her lightning decisions:

"That settles it. Pauli's going to Africa with me!"

Soon after settling in England Essie had begun taking courses on Africa at the London School of Economics, later continuing them at London University. The Robesons had found English people keenly interested in African affairs. Constantly, in social gatherings, they heard the latest gossip passed on concerning a relative or friend "out there," serving, teaching, administering somewhere on the Gold Coast or in South Africa. Every university offered courses in the African languages, about African peoples, rich natural resources and untapped possibilities. Essie had taken up her studies as a sort of supplement to Paul's courses in languages, but her interest had gradually concentrated itself into serious work in anthropology. She had elected to do the field work for her degree in Africa and she and Paul were eagerly looking forward to the moment when Paul's work would allow him to get away. But that moment seemed to recede further and further into the distance. Now this unexpected reason for the trip was projected upon them.

During the remaining weeks of the filming the Robesons talked of little else except Africa. The year before, Akiki Nyabonga, cousin of the king of Toro, had urged them to visit Uganda. Prince Nyabonga was then a student of anthropology at Oxford. He had returned to his home. Essie wrote him and in reply received suggestions for a carefully worked out plan of study, with the assurance of every possible co-operation. Professors at the university were heartily in agreement. With very little delay it was decided that Essie and Pauli would leave directly after the opening of the important picture.

The première of *Sanders of the River* took place in April at Leicester Square Theatre, London. It was a widely heralded event. In the *London Daily Sketch,* April 3, 1935, we read:

". . . crowds outside Leicester Square Theatre to watch celebrities arriving for *Sanders of the River* gala. An ex-Queen, Cabinet Minister, and battalions of less important people packed the foyer. What a bustling and jostling. . . . Queen Victoria Eugénie—she was wearing black—and her escort, Mrs. Redmond McGrath, had some difficulty in getting to the staircase. When the show was over, a blue-coated attendant had to come to the aid of Commander Redmond McGrath in forcing a way through the foyer to enable the Queen to reach the exit. Lord Carisbrooke was with his sister. . . . Cabinet Minister J. H. Thomas, with his wife, were in Sir George and Lady Sutton's party. . . . Lady Ravensdale —a tiara with a halo effect, consisting of large square stones in different colours set in gold . . ." etc., etc., etc. In another part of the article were the words: "Mr. Paul Robeson and his wife attended the première."

The *London Daily Sketch* could not have told of the shocked bleakness of Robeson's despair as he saw the finished product *Sanders of the River* unroll before his startled eyes. Against brief shots of grotesque and painted natives he saw himself smirking and indolent, a puppet on a string. Gone were

all the elements of dignity, of black men living out their lives; gone was the music—the vehicle through which he expected to reveal beauty and truth and power. There remained only the wild beating of the drums—the shouts of savages.

He was stunned. Never before had he refused an audience, but of this night he said, "I was called to the stage and in protest refused to perform."

The Robesons got away from the theater as quickly as possible. Paul felt as though his body had been lashed. What could he do? What could he say? Who would understand?

"My problem is not to counteract the white man's prejudice against the Negro. That does not matter. I have set myself to educate my brother to believe in himself." *

And so he set himself to making another picture. He saw the tremendous possibilities inherent in films—films which could be seen by thousands, films which were easily transported, which could disseminate ideas quickly and to mass audiences.

Film Weekly, May 23, 1936, carried a spread prepared by Paul Robeson. The film announced is *The Song of Freedom.* It was a Lion-Hammer production, starring Robeson.

"I believe this is the first film to give a true picture of many aspects of the life of the colored man in the west. Hitherto, on the screen, he has been caricatured or presented only as a comedy character. This film shows him as a real man, with problems to be solved, difficulties to be overcome. I am sure the audiences will appreciate the picture as much for this unusual honesty of characterisation as for the dramatic intensity of its story."

The morning for Essie's and Pauli's departure seemed suddenly upon him. Certainly there had been days of preparation,

* "Riches of the Black Man's Culture," article by Paul Robeson in *The African Observer.*

but to Paul, absorbed as he was in his work, the whole idea remained in the distance. And then—they were leaving.

It was the twenty-ninth of May and should have been a lovely day, but it wasn't. The air had a nasty chill and the sky a leaden hue; Africa loomed up as a vast and unknown continent, full of terrors and distances. Paul wondered with amazement why he had ever consented to, had, in fact, actually assisted in, such a crazy plan!

Luggage filled the narrow hallway. Larry, understanding and cheerful, arrived to go with them to Waterloo Station where the two intrepid trekkers would catch the boat train to Southampton. Then they were in the taxi rolling through the streets of London.

Essie talked, a little jerkily perhaps; Pauli gazed up at his father with his great eyes shining—and big Paul felt a cold emptiness in his stomach. He settled them comfortably in their compartment, kissed the two good-bye and found himself outside on the platform waving. The train disappeared and Larry was saying:

"For Pete's sake, man—this isn't the end of the world!"

"Larry"—and Paul's voice was utterly woebegone—"they've gone—they've gone to *Africa*!"

But Larry's voice was reassuring.

"So what? And let me tell you—Africa won't stump *Essie*. She'll manage!"

On the train, Essie, tightly squeezing Pauli's hand, was not so certain.

They telephoned him from Capetown, South Africa. And so for the first time Paul Robeson's warm, rich voice was heard on that continent. Essie reported that everything was "wonderful."

"Paul dear, I'm keeping a diary!"

"Fine!" was his comment.

He relaxed then and began reading for his next picture which was to be the filming of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines.* The last week in August he flew to Paris to meet Essie and Pauli, who were burned to a deep bronze. By car, wagon and plane they had trekked across Africa from its southernmost tip to Cairo, Egypt. And safely stowed away in her bag was Essie's journal filled with hastily scribbled notes.

Film Weekly, September 19, 1936, reports:

"Paul Robeson is willing to give up the concert platform, ignore the stage and concentrate solely on films. But only if he can find the right roles in the right pictures. . . . Robeson has never had a role in a film with which he was really satisfied. He is not quite sure even now just what kind of part he is looking for. *The Song of Freedom,* which is on at the Plaza this week, is a kind of test piece. . . .

"Early this week, *King Solomon's Mines* went into production at Shepherd's Bush. Robeson has been signed to play Umbopas. He would like to make that part not just a supporting role in which he will, inevitably, sing, but a living characterization. Not just a 'splendid savage' but a man of real thoughts and ambitions.

"When he has finished *King Solomon's Mines,* Robeson is to make a picture for Capitol Films . . . to be produced by Walter Futter and will probably be directed by Thornton Freeland. Robeson will play the part of an American Negro soldier who remains in Africa after the World War, becomes a chief among the Touaregs and leads his nomadic North African tribe in a dramatic trek across the Sahara."

It was for this last film he went to Africa!

The moment when Paul Robeson first saw Africa take shape, where sky met water and, from the rim of the horizon, advanced to meet him, will never be forgotten. He leaned over

the side of the ship, straining his eyes. And in that moment a wave of consciousness swept over him. The sky was just as blue, no bluer, as the skies over Italy or France—the water just as dusky green and undulating as against the shores of England; the harbor which they entered not as good as San Francisco's, though better than Liverpool. Nature has failed to mold Africa on any unique, queer pattern. This land, as he approached it, appeared as all the other lands he knew.

Most of his time was spent in and around Cairo. He made several trips upon which he did not comment. He talked with people everywhere—listening carefully and weighing each word. He saw a great deal.

He returned to England and made a picture entitled *Toussaint L'Ouverture,* in which he played the part of that black Haitian general who held Napoleon's armies at bay and shattered the Little Corporal's dream of conquest in America.

The skies of the world were darkening. Blood of Ethiopia, China and Spain splashed upon the sun, and Germany was learning the goose step.

London's fashionable West End theaters and West End society were seeing less and less of Paul Robeson. He was no longer singing in "celebrity" concerts. Instead he was appearing in the moving-picture houses and music halls. "Paul Robeson, in person," announced the gaudy lobbies of the Kilburn, State, Trocadero, Elephant and Castle, Gaumont, Hammersmith—admission *sixpence*—with cinema attractions thrown in . . . *three performances* daily!

To stupefied inquiries he replied simply, "I want to reach a wider audience."

He associated himself with the Unity Theatre, "open to all members of the Labour and Trade Union Movement and to those who are in sympathy with our aims and objectives."

Here in a small theater in St. Pancras a man who could have appeared in the most select theaters in London for an

excellent fee performed with workmen, at nothing per week, because he felt that he was doing "something worth while."

"Across the square from the House of Parliament in Westminster last night two young women pleaded for Britain to help their stricken countries. The daughter of the Chinese Ambassador, Dr. Wellington Koo, asked for the millions of her fellow countrymen valiantly trying to stem the tide of Japanese invasion. Daughter of the Emperor of Abyssinia, Princess T'Hsai, refused to accept defeat at the hands of Mussolini. Paul Robeson, who can command huge fees and pack the Albert Hall, came along and sang for nothing because he believes in freedom and justice."

The *Jewish Chronicle,* London, April 8, 1938, says:

"A new and even deeper, more varied quality is entering into Paul Robeson's recitals these days and last Sunday afternoon at Albert Hall that quality was very evident. He does not confine himself to the medium in which he is superlative, that of Spirituals, but is finding songs of other peoples which also have meaning and point for him. Thus his first group included 'Go Down, Moses' and also a modern Soviet song 'Song of Kazakstan,' expressive of the new spirit of Soviet Russia. . . . His second group included one of the songs of the Spanish Republic.

"Robeson's deep humanity and sympathy with other races coming strongly to the forefront was further emphasized when, as the first item of his third group, he sang in Hebrew Engel's 'Kaddish.' Magnificent was his interpretation of this eloquent plea: 'Let there be an end to all these sufferings and woes.' He closed the recital with such a fervent and moving rendering of 'Ole Man River,' such a powerfully sincere declaration of faith 'I must keep struggling, until I'm dying'—that it marked the climax of a recital great not merely in vocal achievement, but in simple, heartfelt emotion."

Robeson—in Manchester to sing at the Free Trade Hall—

"Robeson, the great Negro artist, who has so sweet a compassion for the underdogs of the world, sang last night in the Birmingham Town Hall for the Christmas Tree Fund." Robeson —literally mobbed at the station in Glasgow by autograph seekers; Robeson—in Dublin; Robeson—in Marseilles; Robeson—in Moscow; Robeson—arriving in Barcelona, going on to Madrid—singing in the American Hospital at Villa Paz, at the hospital base at Bennicasime. He visited the Scandinavian countries. In Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm he received tumultuous, unprecedented receptions which became anti-fascist demonstrations. In Oslo, after a concert during which ten thousand people were *outside* the hall, the Nordic patriots fell on their knees, kissing his hands while tears ran down their cheeks. Robeson!

A myth—a legend!

The *London Daily Mail,* commenting on April 4, 1938, said:

"He has lately said that he proposed to devote himself to the songs of all peoples, and his programme last night ranged from the Hebrides to Kazakstan, whence he selected songs from a folk opera by Brusilofsky.

"If it is true that he proposes to desert the Albert Hall it will be a pity, for a voice such as his demands ample space. But an occasional gruff note made one wonder whether he has been taking care of it, the sound being of the kind that usually results from overwork . . ."

The *Glasgow Scotchman,* September 2, tells of a queue a quarter of a mile long and four deep waiting outside the Concert Hall, which formed by four-thirty in the afternoon, waiting to get in to an eight o'clock concert.

"When Paul Robeson appeared on the platform of the City Hall here last night he was overcome with emotion at the spontaneously warm reception of Glasgow's working class. The great artist stood with tears in his eyes while the audience rose,

clapped and shouted their appreciation of his work for Spain and oppressed humanity. Before singing Robeson said he was glad to work for the things we all believe in. . . . Robeson sang songs of the people, of love and the struggle of the people for freedom. In the anteroom Robeson said he had never felt more like singing, and indeed showed this because again and again he gave songs from his wide repertoire of folk music." *

And what of the man himself? Surely he was tired, surely his voice was strained, surely he wanted to get away from the throngs which surrounded him night and day? Every move, every expression, every word said otherwise. His shining eyes, his eagerness, his fastening of names and faces in his mind, his boundless energy, the spring in his gait proclaimed the inner spirit of the man.

During this period Robeson had made only concert trips to America. Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles heard him sing. He toured Canada. He was a "news item"—"Juichi Tsushima, financial counsellor to the Japanese embassies at London, Paris and Washington, and Paul Robeson, Negro actor and singer, were among the two hundred and two passengers on the White Star liner *Olympic,* which docked here today." Town Hall concert—Orchestra Hall concert—Carnegie Hall concert—

Paul Robeson was forty years old when within a few days of each other two papers were saying: "Paul Robeson sang to ten thousand people at the memorial meeting to the International Brigade in London last night. He—"

The *Daily Mail* of Lancastershire, January 14, 1939:

"The affection people have for this man is a modern portent. He came on to the stage last night with that famous slow stride of his, followed by his pianist, Lawrence Brown, who looked like Prime Minister to an African Chief. And an audience which packed this great hall pounded applause."

* The *Glasgow Scotchman,* August 20, 1938.

And yet—is it possible that one whose life was so rich and full, so varied and fruitful, so appreciated, so successful, who was welcomed so heartily wherever he appeared—is it possible that such a one could have grown homesick? I believe this is true. Negroes in America were proud of Paul Robeson. They knew that wherever he went he was their envoy—that he was interpreting them to the world—that he was bringing about understanding between working people everywhere—that he was lifting them in the eyes of other nations. They gloried in his success. They said to each other: "Paul's better off right where he is—where he can go places. If he comes back here—what can he do?"

And Paul Robeson knew they were saying this.

"If he comes back here—what can he do?"

Who would answer that question? Who *could* answer that question?

"I have set myself to educate my brother to believe in himself." This was what he had said. "My brother!" Who is my brother? *I am a Negro.* All men are my brothers. *I am an American. . . .* "to believe in himself." Do my brothers believe in *me*? *I am an American.* There are many Americans—they are my brothers. Do they believe in me? Do they know me?

In the summer of 1939 Paul Robeson returned to America.

18

"LET FREEDOM RING!"

SOMETHING WAS IN THE AIR—something which had not been there seven years before. He felt it as he walked along the streets, heard it in voices coming over the air, saw it on the faces of people on Broadway and in Harlem. It was as if a man who had been sick was walking out—feebly, but with a smile upon his lips. Or, was it youth restored? America could not have lost its youth.

They gathered round Paul Robeson, greeting him, listening to him eagerly wherever he went, but all the time they seemed to share a secret and after a time it came—politely:

"We said it first. Haven't you heard? We hold these things to be self-evident that *all men*—and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our President, is—"

That was the key.

A man sat in the White House—a man who could not walk—but who was reading aloud from old documents and giving life to words rusty from lack of use. Beside him stood the builders of a nation—men who had had the vision to conceive and courage to project a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

"All eyes are opened, or are opening to the rights of man."

"Did he say that?" Robeson's heart was pounding.

"Thomas Jefferson said it first," was the reply, "but Roosevelt is saying it again and again and again."

Better housing, more light, opportunities for youth, a job for every man!

On a Sunday afternoon in October, 1939, the Columbia Broadcasting System tried out a new program which they called "The Pursuit of Happiness." Burgess Meredith, as master of ceremonies, set the mood: "What we have to say seriously can be simply said. It's this: Democracy is a good thing. It works. It may creak a bit, but it works. And in its working, it still turns out good times, good news, good people. . . . Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—of these we sing!"

For the progam its director, Norman Corwin, had dug up something called "Ballad for Americans." Earl Robinson, its creator, had shown it to Paul Robeson, who volunteered to sing the lead. The audience which listens to the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra on Sunday afternoon greeted this part of the announcement. Most of them had heard of Paul Robeson. People all over the country settled comfortably in their armchairs. Then for eleven minutes Paul Robeson and a chorus chanted of how in 1776 Old Sam put on his three-cornered hat, what Patrick Henry said about liberty or death, about George Washington and Tom Jefferson and how Betsy Ross organized a sewing circle and Paul Revere a horse race; about old Abe Lincoln . . . "thin and long" whose "heart was high and his faith was strong, but he hated oppression, he hated wrong."

> Man in white skin can never be free
> While his black brother is in slavery.

> Our country's strong, our country's young
> And her greatest songs are still unsung—

Paul Robeson's voice lifted itself like a mighty trumpet sounding out on a high hill while the chorus was a choir of angels—

It will come again—our marching song will come again,
Simple as a hit tune, deep as our valleys,
High as our mountains, strong as the people who made it.

Six hundred visitors gathered in the studio stamped, shouted and screamed for two minutes while the show was still on the air and for fifteen minutes after. For the next hour telephone calls jammed the Columbia Broadcasting Station's switchboard. In the next few days bales of letters demanded words, music, recordings and another time for "Ballad for Americans." Publishers offered to print Earl Robinson's song, and Paul Robeson was contracted to make a recording. Broadway began maneuvering for a production.

"Paul Robeson's back!"

Downtown casting offices were stormed. Word had gone out that a big play was in the making—that a large cast would be used and that singers were needed. Harlem was elated. Forgotten was the depression—Mr. Roosevelt sure was wonderful!

The play which finally materialized was *John Henry,* "a fantasy with music in two acts and eleven scenes, derived by Roark Bradford from his collection of short stories of the same name. Music by Jacques Wolfe and lyrics by Mr. Bradford."

John Henry opened the following winter at the Forty-fourth Street Theater. It was an enormous production and the music was extraordinarily beautiful, but the whole was hardly more than a series of miscellaneous pictures in the rolling career of a man of muscle—a desultory narration, underwritten and put together in perfunctory fashion. Several directors failed to whip the mass of material into a drama that moved on the stage. But Paul Robeson was greeted with cheers and given an ovation when the curtain fell. Said Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times*:

"It is something to see Paul Robeson again and to hear the cavernous roar of his voice. . . . An uneven show with music

that is also of mixed quality, it serves chiefly to renew acquaintance with a man of magnificence who ought to be on the stage frequently in plays that suit him. For there is something heroic about this huge man with a deep voice and great personal dignity." He spoke highly of Ruby Elzy, who played the part of John Henry's sweetheart and of Joshua White and his banjo. "But the melancholy fact seems to be that *John Henry* has little of the theater's magical genius, despite the splendor of individual numbers. It serves chiefly to remind us that someone ought to write a musical drama that would arouse Paul Robeson's spirit and keep him on the stage."

There is everything dismal about the failure of a play. So many people's hopes are shattered. Robeson felt this keenly and did everything in his power to keep the play going. But it was no use.

Hollywood wanted him. The picture *The Emperor Jones* had been good box office. Robeson himself knew that much of the vital, primitive dignity of Eugene O'Neill's play had been washed out of the film and cheap melodrama added. He was wary of Hollywood, but he retained his faith in the power and potentialities of the screen. His British films had grown progressively better. And so he signed a contract.

Meanwhile Pauli had entered the Technical High School in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Mrs. Robeson had found a house—a big, rambling country place with white columns at the doorway, lots of grounds and plenty of garden space—"the ideal place to raise a boy." It was an old New England colonial house a few miles out of Hartford, Connecticut, and proved to be a case of love at first sight for Paul. Here, he told himself, he could enjoy leisure and privacy. The house was purchased, repairs and a few minor alterations were made. They christened their home "The Beeches," but Paul refers to it as "the old plantation."

With everything going so well, Essie decided to continue her

work in anthropology. She had taken her master's degree from London University. Now she enrolled at Hartford Seminary Foundation, a candidate for the Ph.D. She felt that she could make a real contribution in this field on the peoples of Africa. The journal which she had kept during her trip became a constant reference. Professors and fellow students became interested in this journal. Frequent comments were:

"You've got a book there."

"Why don't you publish it?"

Before she realized it *African Journey* was taking shape.

And then the enemy struck—with bombs on Pearl Harbor, but just as surely on Detroit and Boston, on Beaumont, Texas, and high places overlooking the Potomac. The nation rocked back on its heels.

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

The President had said it when he took his place at the helm of the nation. Now—its peoples began to close their ranks.

We are a nation of many nationalities, of many races, of many religions brought together by a single unity—the love of freedom.

It was a time to sing—together. And Paul Robeson led the way—singing with the ten thousand workers in the North American Aviation Plant at Los Angeles—dedicating his songs to the United Nations as he sang before seven thousand people packed into the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco. French folk songs, Spanish songs, Russian songs, old English songs, a Chinese lullaby, a prayer in Hebrew—he sang them in their many native tongues, sang them with passion, sincerity and strength—until the people rose in one great audience and cheered.

At the convention of the National Maritime Union a new member was presented. The chairman stood on the platform beside a tall, dark man whose eyes were smiling—Brother Paul

Robeson! The crowd roared. Here before them stood a great man, famous the world over. Loved by everyone who heard him—not alone for his great voice, but for everything he stood for. He lifted his hand and they were still—listening while he talked to them quietly—told them what he knew of Fascism. Then he stopped speaking abruptly and said he would sing whatever they wanted. Requests were shouted from every part of the room—"Hey, Paul, sing 'Joe Hill' "—"How 'bout 'Ole Man River' "—" 'Peat Bog Soldiers.' "

One by one, he filled all their requests. Men with gray hair and deeply lined faces were young again. They shouted and clapped. Men who were daily risking their lives delivering the weapons of war across the ocean buried these songs in their hearts and returned to their ships more determined than ever that Fascism shall be destroyed.

There were times during that summer of '43 when Washington was a depressing place, a Jim Crow town, a town with marble buildings which nobody called home, a town with wide streets and overcrowded rooming houses, a town where selfish men on Capitol Hill quarrelled and bickered.

I am fighting for a free America—for the rights of the little man.

Congress had just done a job on the President's veto of the Smith-Connally bill, and had blocked the subsidy program in the bargain. But at the open-air Watergate concert, which is a long-established institution in Washington, Paul Robeson was scheduled to sing.

On the last Friday evening in June every streetcar for miles around was filled with the crowd going to hear Paul Robeson. Great streams of people, white and Negro, filled the grassy walks on the way to the Watergate.

Lingering red streaks of sunset were still in the sky. There were thousands and thousands of people sitting on wooden seats facing a wooden barge in the Potomac where the National

Symphony Orchestra plays every night during the summer months. There were people lined up on the graceful, stone bridges overlooking the barge, people sitting on the grass around the improvised stadium and even a couple of blocks away on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Altogether there were about twenty-two thousand people listening to Robeson, including thousands of Negroes who rarely go to Watergate concerts. The sunset was all gone. It was dark and lights from the bridges glimmered in the Potomac. The crisscross of big searchlights caught an occasional plane like a tiny firefly.

"I will now sing 'Ballad for Americans'!" Robeson announced one final encore.

Holding its breath, the audience strained forward to listen.

> For a man in a white skin can never be free
> While his brother in black is still in slavery.
>
> Our country's strong, our country's young
> And her greatest songs are still unsung—

Twenty-two thousand people thundered an applause which must have echoed in the halls of Congress.

A great artist had spoken in song his protest against intolerance and bigotry and Axis-inspired riots. And the audience responded. This was an answer in the capital of the United States to the bloody violence in Detroit, to the lie that Negroes and whites cannot live and work and enjoy art and music together.

Still there was more for him to do. It was as when his teacher, little Miss Miller, had peered at the gangling boy and said, "You carried the ball so well Saturday—now there's something else."

Could Paul Robeson play *Othello* in New York? The emphatic "No" of by-gone years was growing faint. It was the Theater Guild, foremost producing organization in the Ameri-

can theater, and Margaret Webster, who had directed all of the Maurice Evans productions, who accepted the challenge.

They tried it out in the Cambridge Summer Theater, the week of August 10, 1942, with Uta Hagen playing Desdemona and José Ferrer as Iago. The *Boston Transfer,* August 11, 1942, said, without committing itself:

"Anything theatrical directed by Margaret Webster is an event."

After this followed months of intensive work. And then on October 19, 1943, the Theater Guild presented *Othello,* starring Paul Robeson. It was utterly impossible to get tickets a week after the announcement was made. Thousands of people in New York, thousands of people all over the country, actually did not sleep until they had got hold of a paper or in some way heard what happened at the Shubert Theater that night.

Reviewers ran out of words. They became confused and incoherent. Robert Garland, writing in the *New York Journal-American,* October 20, 1943, closed his article with:

"I am well aware that this is no collegiate report on the reproduction of a classic English play. Frankly, I intended that it should be. But, after last night's electric projection, it is merely a piece in praise of a damned good show. Go see it!"

"For make no doubt about it, the Theater Guild production of this Shakespearean drama, which registered such a roaring hit when it opened at the Shubert last night that the canyons of Times Square echoed the applause for a full twenty minutes after the final curtain, is one of the most memorable events in the history of the theater."—Burton Rascoe

The *New York Sun* said: "Paul Robeson, the first Negro of modern times to appear in a New York presentation, gives a giant's stature and remarkable clarity and vitality to his role." It went on and on in the same strain.

It was a glorious triumph for Robeson and for the Ameri-

can theater and for the grand tradition of Shakespeare, and for the human race, in general.

Mike Gold wrote an article about the audience.

"Most Broadway first nights attract an audience that almost makes a profession out of being seen at such evenings. It is the carriage trade of New York, and it really doesn't speak for the nation. . . . But Paul Robeson's first-night audience consisted of universal humanity and its applause was not that of a clique. This was the American people greeting Shakespeare. It reminded one of the great days in New York when the people formed torchlight processions for Shakespearean actors like Macready and Booth, dragged their carriages through the streets, and fought bitter street battles over their respective merits.

"Rubbing shoulders with the stock-market dukes and black-market barons and their expensive ladies were accounting clerks and merchant seamen, lady welders and housewives and well-known trade-union leaders—carpenters, house painters and hundreds of erect, clean young men in army or navy uniform. A large delegation of professors and students from Princeton sat together; many famous actors, authors, musicians, painters and sculptors rubbed shoulders with British sailors, Hindus and European refugees. There was a certain millionaire sitting in the midst of some dark, handsome, eager faces that came from Harlem. . . ." *

With his singing, Robeson had won a place in the cultural life of America. Now, with *Othello* the theatrical critics said that "Robeson has restored dignity and power to the shabby commercial stage."

The record for consecutive New York performances of *Othello* had been held by Walter Hampden, who played the role fifty-seven times; *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* had each had one hundred and fifty-seven consecutive show-

* *The Daily Worker*, October 21, 1943.

ings in New York—the highest record for Shakespeare. But the Theater Guild's production of *Othello* with Paul Robeson played two hundred and ninety-six performances—closing July 1, 1944, with the announcement:

"Termination of the New York run is made necessary because of the heavy burdens of the leading role. If the rest of the country is to get the fresh performances to which it is entitled, a rest is imperative."

For all the nation was to see Paul Robeson in *Othello.*

Eight thousand people closely packed together crowded as near as they could to Madison Square Garden. They could not get in, but loud-speakers were bringing them the program. Mounted policemen steered traffic around them, kept the subway entrances open and wisecracked a little with pretty girls. It was an orderly crowd and a balmy spring night.

"I was here a few minutes after eight, but we couldn't get near the gates." The stout lady shifted her weight.

"Me, too. I *told* Harry we should'ov left dinner." The pretty girl looked up accusingly.

"Aw—honey! We can hear all right."

"Yes—but I wanna see!" She didn't say anything about standing three hours.

There was a Freedom Rally going on inside the Garden. The people were having a talk and song feast. Representatives had flown from Los Angeles and Mobile and Maine.

Only with the continuing and growing confidence between our Allies and all freedom-loving peoples—

It was eleven o'clock and after. Then the people outside heard a roar which seemed to tear away the roof. It lasted several minutes and in the sudden hush which followed the announcer said:

"And now—Paul Robeson will lead us in our closing."

The folks outside couldn't see the star of *Othello,* beads of perspiration clinging to his brow, trying to catch his breath after his dash from the theater; they couldn't see the tall dark man as he stood in a pool of light cast by the massive searchlights in the dome—on a tiny platform, surrounded by tier upon tier of packed seats that climbed to the ceiling. No, they couldn't see his smile as he looked round at all the faces—faces of many colors and varying types—faces of old men and faces of young boys; they couldn't see his head lift with pride, nor his eyes flash with fire—but they could hear him. They could hear that voice as it lifted the people to their feet—they could hear the golden notes as they poured from his throat—they could hear each word that he gave each listener like a shining, bright thing for his very own:

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring!

19

RECAPITULATION—HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

THE PEOPLE WERE GIVING a birthday party. Long before seven o'clock the streets approaching the 17th Regiment Armory on Park Avenue at 34th were jammed.

"What's going on?" asked a passer-by.

"A party—a birthday party for Paul Robeson!" They tossed the information round, laughing.

"He's forty-six years old!"

The Council on African Affairs had been behind the idea. Paul Robeson was one of its founders and served as its Chairman, but it was the Executive Director, Dr. Max Yergan, who had engineered the plan and had taken care of the innumerable details. Sponsors included Elizabeth Bergner, Olin Downes, Duke Ellington, W. C. Handy, Lillian Hellman, Lena Horne, Rockwell Kent, Sergeant Joe Louis, Quentin Reynolds, Teddy Wilson, Herman Shumlin, Marc Connelly. Stars of the stage and screen had offered their services as entertainers. The committee knew he would not want them to call people together merely to wish him well. These were war times and he counted each precious moment. But tickets were sold—the proceeds to go for the work of the Council—"dedicated to new relations with Africa, victory over Fascism, and in the interest of the African people." They had to choose an evening when *Othello* was not playing, so Sunday, April 19, was the date announced. The 17th Regiment Armory was selected because

it would hold eight thousand people and the committee was anxious that everyone who desired should share in the fun.

A taxi drew up several blocks away and stopped.

"Can't get no closer." The driver's announcement was unnecessary.

"Good heavens! Don't you suppose the doors are open yet?"

The occupants—all seven of them—piled out and began jostling their way through the crowd.

"No need of pushing!"

"Hold on to your ticket—you'll get in."

Comments were good-natured, but progress seemed very slow.

"Hey—got any extra tickets?" someone was calling.

"And what would anybody do with an *extra* ticket?"

Finally it became apparent that the police were admitting a steady stream into the armory but only those already holding tickets. They say something like four thousand persons were turned away.

Inside, the circular stage had been made to resemble a massive birthday cake with giant candles around the edge. The snow-white grand piano was a bit of frosting. It was a jolly crowd, come together to have a good time, to create an evening of relaxation for one they loved.

The lights in the armory dimmed a little and the huge candles lighted up. Then they saw him—entering through a side door, trying to slip in for the moment unobserved—but they saw him. And as one man they rose to their feet and in one voice they sang:

Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday, dear Paul;
Happy birthday to you!

He bowed and took his seat and then for more than two hours his friends and co-workers gamboled, frolicked, danced and sang for his amusement: Zero Mostel, Hazel Scott, Teddy Wilson and his band, Pearl Primus, Josh White, Count Basie and his orchestra, Mildred Bailey, Jimmy Durante—it was as if they said:

"Come on, Paul, you've worked so hard—relax—laugh! You got it coming to you!"

Greetings and the thanks of China were brought by Anna May Wong; Vicente Lombardo Toledano, president of the Latin-American Confederation of Labor, laid at Paul Robeson's feet tributes from the people of Latin America; Mary McLeod Bethune called him "the tallest tree in our forest," and Seymour Ponner, of the Philadelphia Opera, sang the song especially composed for the occasion by Sam Morgenstein, "I Know a Man." Greetings were read from Vice-President Wallace. Telegrams had poured in from men and women in every walk of life. Marc Connelly said that Robeson "represents a highly desirable tomorrow which, by some lucky accident, we are privileged to appreciate today." Master of ceremonies for this part of the program was José Ferrer, Robeson's Iago in *Othello,* whose presentation of the 372nd Infantry Battalion Glee Club was a rousing tribute to the Negro soldier. City Councilman Benjamin Davis complimented the people of New York for giving this birthday present to "our friend."

Paul was called to the platform to receive a birthday cake so large it had to be carried by two men. It had been made for him by the Bakers Union, Local 1—six glistening, white tiers topped with a frosted globe from which waved an American flag.

He tried to speak and his voice was choked. Then he nodded to Lawrence Brown, who had taken his place at the

piano—the same Lawrence Brown who had been playing for him since 1925—and Larry Brown's fingers rippled over the keys. The crowd grew very still and waited and then, very softly, Robeson began to sing. Many eyes were wet, blurring the figure of the man who stood there—straight and tall, in his tuxedo, wearing the beard he had grown for *Othello,* holding a paper which shook a little in his hands. He was older. His face showed lines. But there was no sagging in those shoulders—no hint of defeat in the carriage of that proud head. This was the man whose father had run away from slavery to find freedom, the man who through discouragements, indignities and pain had come up smiling, with a song upon his lips.

They cheered each song, begging for more. His voice grew hoarse. His fatigue was evident and so they called out: "Stop! Save your voice, Paul!"

He thanked them and began to speak of the need for world unity, of the people's faith in the better world to come. He paid tribute to the great African masses and emphasized the need to help them win self-determination, to bring them into the great federation of nations.

"In the present world struggle, I see my work as a social weapon, not as art for art's sake. The mainspring of my life as an artist and as a person is a responsibility to the democratic forces for which I fight."

No—there never was a birthday party quite like this one. The people went out onto the streets of New York saying so.

They knew they had taken part in something very big—something much bigger than the armory on Park and 34th Street could hold—bigger than New York—bigger than all the whole United States. They had linked hands around the world that night and had moved

Forward with a strong and active faith.

Many happy birthdays, Paul!

CODA

EVEN THE STAR'S dressing room at the Shubert Theater is much too small for him. He'd wiped the grease paint off hastily and when he stood up to greet me I could see the shadows underneath his smiling eyes. I knew how tired he must be and I stated my business as quickly as possible.

"A book—about me?" The idea seemed to startle him.

"It could be a wonderful book."

He looked at me—evidently struggling with himself. He seemed embarrassed.

"But—I—I—There's so little to say—" He shook his head and spread his hands. "I'm just in the process— I'm trying to— I'm not ready. There's nothing yet to—" Something in my face must have stopped him.

I tried to explain that his life was an inspiration—surely a book about him would help and encourage boys and girls everywhere, that—

His eyes lit up. For boys and girls he would do anything.

"You think it would help them?"

"I'm sure it would."

He still hesitated—about the wisdom—about whether there was enough to say—

"I'm so busy—if you could yourself just—"

I have tried to project this great man. None of the facts in this book were given me by Mr. Paul Robeson. They were gleaned from hundreds of people, relatives and friends, who have known and loved him—from old scrapbooks, from letters, from programs, from scraps of paper, unearthed in odd corners of many strange places. They seemed to me like bits of music—music he'd dropped here and there throughout the world—music which had been stored up for this very time. For the bits of music blended. Woven together, I believe they make his song.

SHIRLEY GRAHAM

AFTERWORD

PAUL ROBESON—tallest tree in the forest—"high as the mountains," they said of him in Europe. And BIG! That big smile embracing everybody in sight—and beyond; the big voice speaking or singing. All-American, unexcelled at a people's rally, on stage, or in the concert hall.

OUR PAUL!

I took a picture of Paul and W.E.B. at Stratford-on-Avon where we went to see him in "Othello." He towers like a giant over my husband, but both of them stand so straight and gratified that their pride and joy in each other is caught by the camera.

I think of him leaning on the mantle of our settling room in Grace Court, looking up at the painting of Frederick Douglass; W.E.B. stretched out on his lounging chair before the fire and both of them talking. They loved to talk, to exchange ideas and experiences, to swap stories. And how they laughed together!

I remember that Sunday evening when he sang in London's famous St. Paul's Cathedral—his magnificent voice rising to the vaulted dome, reflected in the stain glass windows and resting upon the hushed crowd like a benediction.

I never heard Paul say that Black is beautiful—he simply *lives* beautifully

Paul Robeson—Symbol of Manhood, of Courage, of Loyalty to the Best, the Unbowed and Undefeated:

Paul Robeson—Beautiful!

With sincere gratitude for his being,
Shirley Graham Du Bois

Reprinted by permission of FREEDOMWAYS magazine, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1971

BIBLIOGRAPHY

African Journey, by Eslanda Goode Robeson. John Day Company, New York, 1945.

"Voice of Freedom" in *Thirteen Against the Odds*, by Edwin R. Embree. The Viking Press, New York, 1943.

Fire Under the Andes, by Elizabeth Shipley Sargeant. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1927.

Portraits in Color, by Mary White Ovington. The Viking Press, New York, 1927.

Paul Robeson, Negro, by Eslanda Goode Robeson. Gollancz, London, 1930.

ARTICLES

"Interviewing Paul Robeson," by Julia Dorn, *New Theater*, July, 1935.

"Paul Robeson," by Elizabeth Sargeant, *The New Republic*, March 3, 1926.

"Riches of the Black Man's Culture," by Paul Robeson, *The African Observer*, London, June, 1933.

"The Culture of the Negro," by Paul Robeson, *The Spectator*, London, June 15, 1934.

"Soviet Culture," by Paul Robeson, Foreword to *Favorite Songs of the Red Army*. Published by Russian-American Music, New York, 1941.

"America's No. 1 Negro," by Jerome Beatty, *The American Magazine*, May, 1944.

The Schomberg Collection, New York Public Library.

The James Weldon Johnson Collection of Negro Arts and Letters, founded by Carl Van Vechten, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

INDEX

Ackerman, Dr., 40, 44–46
Aldridge, Ira, 53, 207
All God's Chillun Got Wings, 140–41, 142–43
Alpha Phi Alpha, 107–10, 117–18
Africa, 232, 237
African Journey, 246
Astaire, Adele, 148
Atkinson, Brooks, 244–45
Austria, 205–6

Baker, Josephine, 128
Ballad for Americans, 243–44
Bantus, 20
Barcelona, 3–5
Berlin, 206–7
Biddle University, 21, 49
Black Boy, 182–85
Blake, Eubie, 101–5, 128
Boston, 181–82
Boutté, Matthew, 97–100
Broun, Heywood, 144, 159
Brown, Lawrence, 12, 14, 150–53, 155, 158, 161, 181–82, 187, 194, 199, 202, 204, 235, 255
Brown University, 67, 70–71
Browne, Maurice, 208

Campbell, Mrs. Pat, 186
Chicago, 180–81
Clark, Emily, 154
Columbia Medical Center, 121
Columbia University, 93, 96
Corwin, Norman, 243
Council of African Affairs, 253
Covarrubias, Miguel, 148
Czechoslovakia, 203

Davenport Street School, 25–28
Deep River, 205
Desdemona, Viola Diehl, 48, 52; Peggy Ashcroft, 208; Uta Hagen, 249
Devann's Restaurant, 115–17
Douglas, James, 194
Douglass, Frederick, 21
Douglass, Stanley, 62, 90
Douglass, Winston, 90
Dreiser, Theodore, 147
Du Bois, Dr. W. E. B., 97, 117–18, 194

Ebbets Field, *see* Newport Naval Reserves
Emperor Jones, The, with Gilpin, 125, 129, 139; with Robeson, 141–42, 164, 166–67, 206–7, 221

Ferrer, José, 249, 255
Fitzgerald, Mary Eleanor, 144, 159

Garland, Robert, 249
Germany, 201–3
Gershwin, George, 147–48, 152, 155

Gilpin, Charles, 104, 125–27, 129–30, 139, 141
Glaspell, Susan, 144
Go Down, Moses, 160, 203, 238
Gold, Mike, 250
Goode, Mrs., 186, 195, 198, 214, 230
Graham, Shirley, foreword, 210–17, 257–58
Greenwich Village, 135–39, 160

Hailstock, Frank, 108, 112
Hairy Ape, The, 221
Hammerstein, Oscar, 193
Hammond, Percy, 149, 159
Handy, William C., 114, 193
Hardwicke, Sir Cedric, 193
Hartford, 245–46
Harlem, 95–120
Harwood, H. M., 164
Hayes, Roland, 151
Henry, Patrick, 18, 38–39
Hughes, Langston, 193, 209
Hungary, 205

Ireland, 207, 239

Jamison, James, 25–27, 33–35
John Henry, 244–45
Johnson, Hewlett, 222
Johnson, James Weldon, 147, 155–57
Johnson, J. Rosamond, 103
Jones, Robert Edmond, 128, 139, 144
Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho, 161

Kahn, Otto, 147
Kern, Jerome, 193
King Solomon's Mines, 236
Knopf, Alfred, 147
Korda, Joltan, 229

Lafayette Theater, 104, 127
Light, James, 132, 159, 162–64, 183, 184
Lincoln University, 18, 21, 88, 90, 105
Lindsay, Vachel, 194
Liveright, Horace, 183
London, 162–69, 186–90, 193–95, 198, 206, 207–17, 221–23, 229–36, 237
London School of Economics, 232
London University, 232, 246
Long Voyage Home, 166
Lyle and Miller, 102

McClendon, James, 108, 110–16
Macdougal Street, 135–44
McGee, Harold, 159, 162–64
MacGowan, Kenneth, 132, 140
McKay, Claude, 175–77, 193
Macpherson, Kenneth, 206
Madrid, 11
Manchester, 238
Marseilles, 239
Meredith, Burgess, 243
Miller and Lyle, 102
Miller, Miss Anna R., 47–49, 247
Milwaukee Badgers, 123
Mis' Fannie, 19, 25
Mitchell, Abbie, 104, 183
Moore, 90–91
Moscow, 223–26, 239

Narragansett Bay, 61, 63–66, 68–71
Narragansett Pier, 62, 68–69, 93

Nathan, George Jean, 143
Negro Boy and the Monkey, The, 225
Newport Naval Reserves, 78–80
New York, 63–64, 95–162, 179, 182–86, 195, 242–56

Ol' Man River, foreword, 238, 247
O'Neill, Eugene, 126, 139–44, 166–68, 221
Othello, 48–49, 51–53, 56–57, 207–17, 248–52

Paris, 189, 199–200
Patterson, Minnie Sumner, 197–98, 204
Payne, John, 168
Phi Beta Kappa, 81, 83
Philadelphia, 218–20
Pitt, Malcolm, 75–84, 88
Poland, 205
Pollard, Fritz, 67, 70–71, 104–5
Pops, 100–5, 110
Potter, Lizzie, 29–33
Potter, Margaret, 30–36, 58–63, 90
Powell, Adam, 209
Presbyterian Hospital, 119–20
Princeton, N. J., 23, 24
Princeton University, 38, 73, 82–83
Provincetown Players, 126, 132, 139–44, 158
Pursuit of Happiness, The, 243

Rascoe, Burton, 249
Recklings, family, 69–70
Rhode Island, *see* Narragansett
Riviera, 170–78
Robeson, Benjamin, 18–22, 49, 92, 187, 196
Robeson, Eslande Goode, 116–17, 119–29, 143, 150–53, 162–64, 165, 168–70, 175–78, 186, 197–200, 202–5, 208, 214–16, 230–32, 234–36, 245–46
Robeson, Maria Louisa Bustill, 22–23, 90
Robeson, Marion, 49–52, 187, 196, 210, 220
Robeson, Paul Jr., 190, 195, 231–32, 234, 245
Robeson, William, 18, 49–52, 64, 92, 187–88
Robeson, Rev. William D., 12–22, 88–89, 91, 93–94
Robinson, Avery, 196
Robinson, Earl, 243–44
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 220, 242, 244, 246
Roumania, 205
Rudd, Edward, 109
Rule, George, 76–82
Russia, 177, 222–27
Rutgers University, 58, 67, 72–93, 96, 124

St. James Infirmary, 113
St. Louis Blues, 114
Salemme, Antonio, 144–46
Sanders of the River, 229–34
Sanford, George Foster, 72–75, 78, 82, 92, 123–24
Scandinavia, 239
Shakespeare, *see* Othello
Show Boat, 193–95
Shuffle Along, 128–29
Simon the Cyrenian, 129–32

Sissle, Noble, 100–5, 128
Smyth, Sanford and Gerard, Inc., 124–25
Somerville High School, 40–49, 52–53, 55–57, 90
Somerville, N. J., 19, 25
Song of Freedom, The, 234, 236
Song of Kazakstan, 238
Spain, 3–15, 239, 240
Spencer, Niles, 144
Stallings, Lawrence, 143
Steal Away, Steal Away, 152
Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, 144
Stevens, Thaddeus, 20
Switzerland, 206

Taboo, 186–90
Thorndike, Sybil, 208, 209
Torrence, Ridgely, *see* Simon the Cyrenian
Toussaint L'Ouverture, 237

Unity Theatre, 237

Van Doren, Carl, foreword
Van Vechten, Carl, 107, 146–58, 159, 161, 193, 214
Van Vechten, Fania Marinoff, 149–50, 155

Wallace, Edgar, 229
Walker, Adele, 150
Walpole, Hugh, 167
Walrond, Eric, 210–11
Washington, D. C., 247–48
Washington, Fredi, *see* Edith Warren
Warren, Edith, 183–86, 190
Water Boy, foreword, 196
Webster, Margaret, 249
Westcott, Glenway, 144, 169
Westley, Helen, 148
White, Walter, 146, 159
Woollcott, Alexander, 182
Wylie, Eleanor, 147

Y.W.C.A., Dramatic Group, 125

BOOKS BY SHIRLEY GRAHAM

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

DR. GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER: Scientist
(with George Lipscomb)

JEAN BAPTISTE POINTE DESABLE
Founder of Chicago

PAUL ROBESON: Citizen of the World

THE STORY OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY
Poetess of The American Revolution

THERE WAS ONCE A SLAVE
Frederick Douglass

YOUR MOST HUMBLE SERVANT
Benjamin Banneker

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY
118 157
UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY